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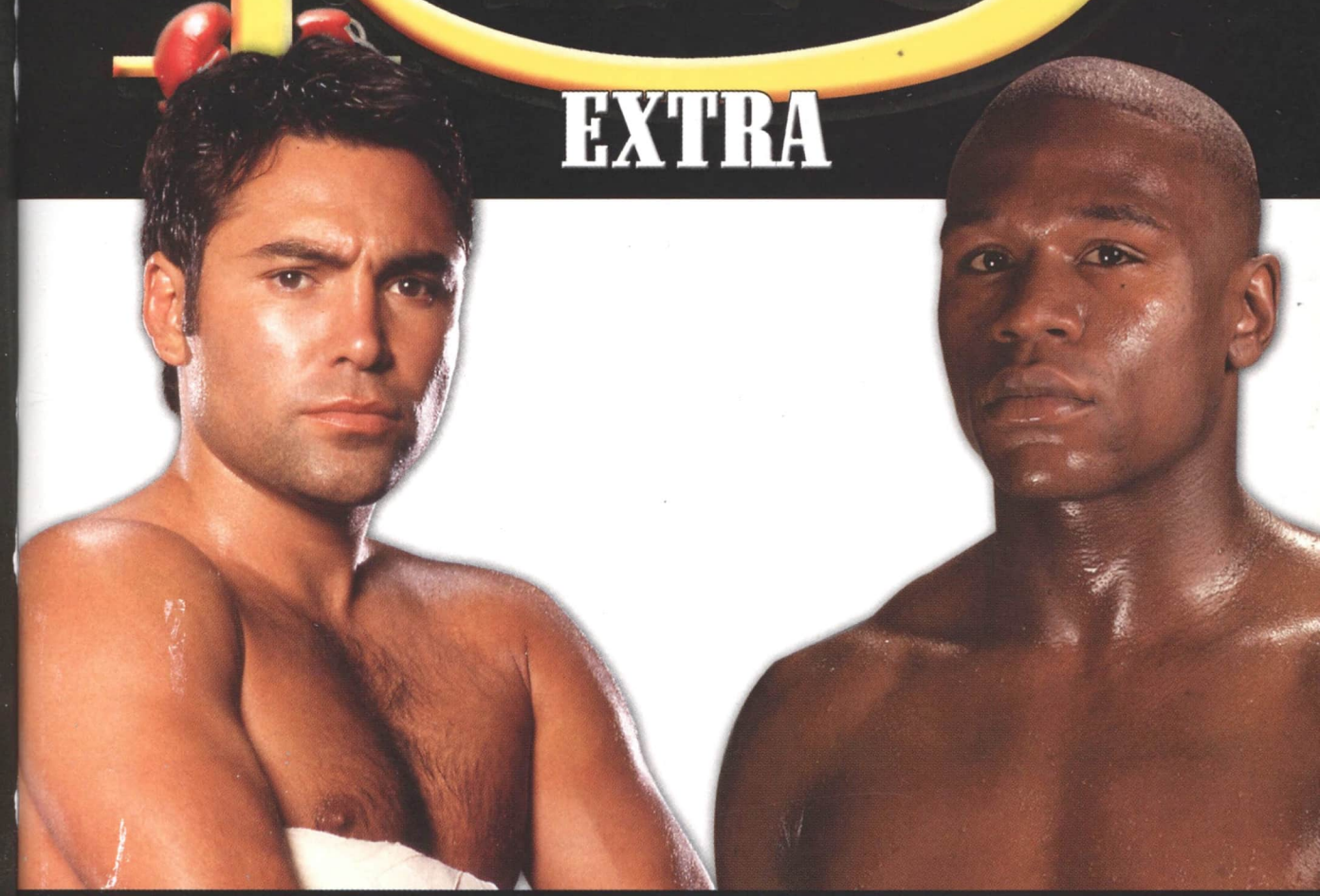

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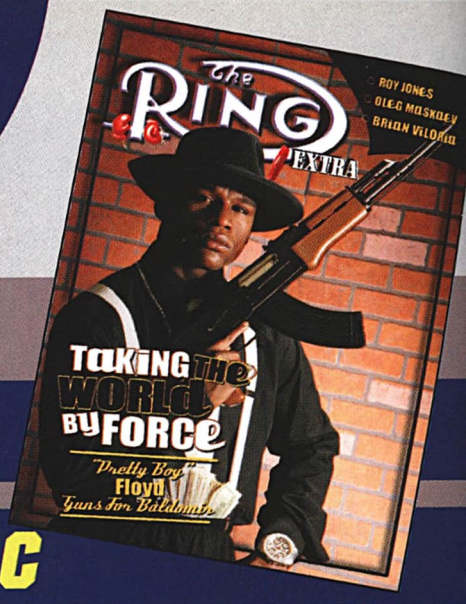

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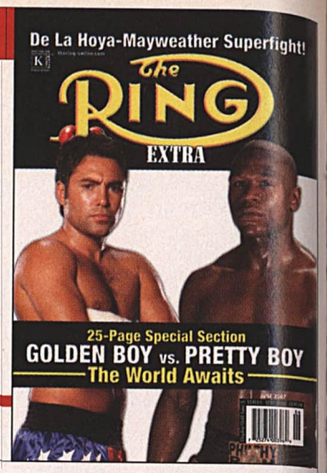

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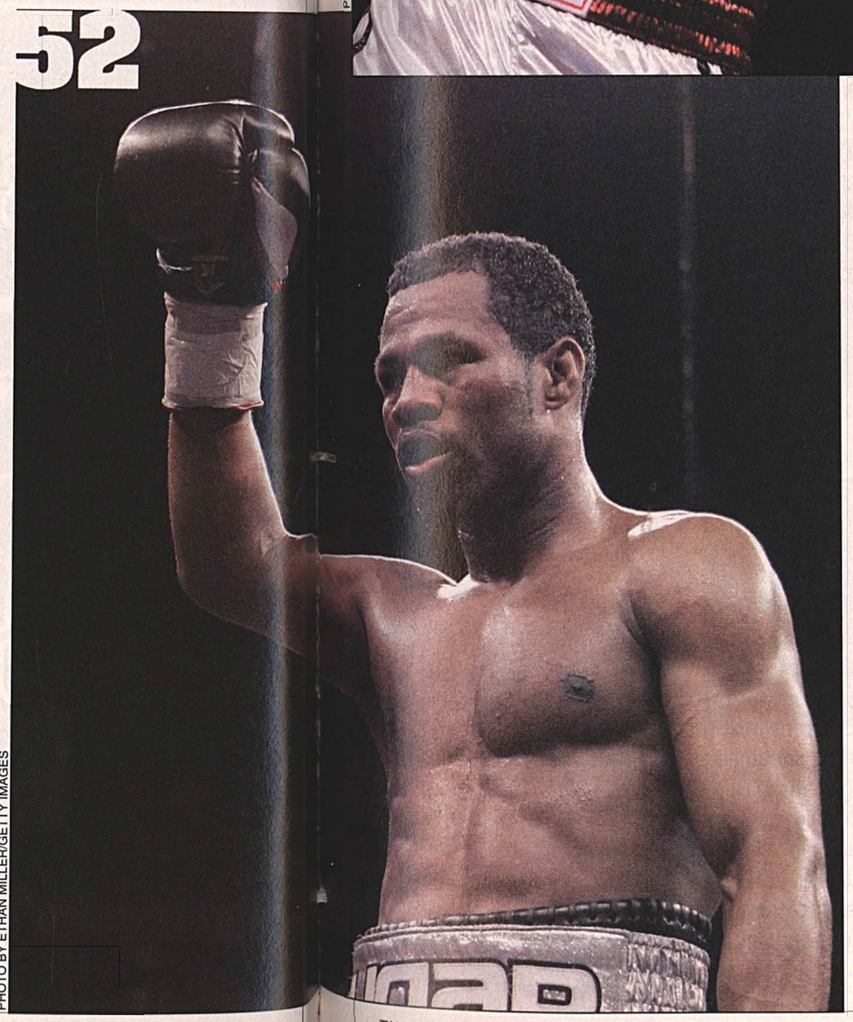

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PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

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The RING

If fighters want to give away their money, there are thousands of worthy charities that would be delighted to take it. But a shocking number of them would rather give their money to various alphabet organizations. And what do they get for their generosity? A royal screwing, that's what.

It's an old story, but a lot of pugs just don't seem to get it. They keep giving and keep getting screwed. What's the matter with these guys? Don't they realize how long these bandits have been getting fat on their blood, sweat, and brain cells?

But, hey fellows, forget history for a moment. Just look around and see the sort of jive-ass crap that's going down right now:

Exhibit A: Ricky Hatton was forced to relinquish the IBF strap he recently "regained" by defeating Juan Urango. That's right. Hatton has won and lost the IBF title before, which makes absolutely no sense whatsoever—because Ricky is undefeated!

Exhibit B: Joel Casamayor no longer holds the WBC lightweight title. Why? Because the WBC just stripped him.

Both Casamayor and Hatton paid significant sanctions fees for the privilege of fighting for these titles. They lost them because they didn't want to defend against the organization's mandatory contenders. Instead, they want to make more money by defending against more attractive challengers in bouts that most fans would rather see.

You can certainly understand the fighters' point of view in this regard, and it may seem like the right thing to do, both for themselves and the fans. But it's much more complicated than that. The alphabet gangs don't give a damn when a titleholder goes against their wishes. They can always find another sucker, and it's frequently one they've shafted before.

It's time fighters began to share the blame for this alphabet madness, because it is they, as much as their managers and promoters, who enable this monumental scam to endure and prosper. As we used to say back in the 1960s, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem. And if you don't think the fighters themselves are part of the problem, you're not paying attention.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

CORRECTION

In Ivan Goldman's "Digging Deep" column in the March 2007 edition of THE RING, it was incorrectly stated that the Kermit Cintron-Mark Suarez fight was not on HBO because Cintron's "manager" did not agree to "fight options" with promoter Lou DiBella, who held the rights to promote the October 28, 2006, fight card. DiBella was in negotiations with Bobby Bostick, who is Cintron's promoter (not his manager, as the column claimed), and DiBella informed THE RING that he offered Bostick two manners in which to make a deal to have the Cintron-Suarez fight on the HBO date: 1) agree on a flat fee, or 2) accept a larger amount that includes "economic participation" in Cintron's next two fights. Bostick did not accept either offer and the fight wound up being streamed on maxboxing.com. THE RING article was based on a report on maxboxing in which Bostick was quoted about his take on the negotiations with DiBella.

THE RING article implied that the second option violated the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act with regard to "options" on Cintron. This is not the case, as the Ali Act creates a "Firewall Between Promoters and Managers" (Section 8b), not between two promoters.

THE RING regrets both not seeking DiBella's account of the negotiations and any inaccuracies in fact or law contained in the article.

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Nigel Collins

MANAGING EDITOR
Joseph Santoliquito

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NATIONAL CIRCULATION MANAGERS
Robert Nucci
Dave Hagman

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Vincent Bellissima
(215) 643-6385
vbellissima@kappapublishing.com

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT
Dianne Weber

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
London Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9
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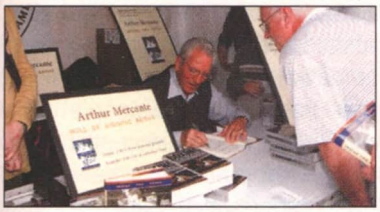

Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

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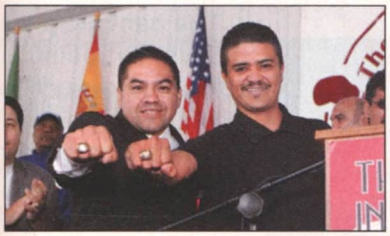

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Bob Arum and Angelo Dundee point to their plaques on the Hall of Fame Wall.

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Pacquiao The Politician

In the often crazy, colorful, topsy-turvy world of daily Philippine life, genuine heroes are almost too few to mention. That's why when Manny Pacquiao announced that he would run for a congressional seat from his home district of South Cotabato in the Southern Philippines this coming May, the howl of protest from Filipinos was almost unanimous.

Sensing that the intrigues of dirty politics will lead to a quick downfall of Pac-Man's illustrious boxing career, and thus take away from the people their once-in-a-generation hero, Filipinos have been practically begging Pacquiao not to run. Why, they desperately want to know, would their icon stain his hard-earned reputation and image in the cesspool of Philippine politics? And why now, when he's at the peak of his fighting powers and earning potential?

Some say this grade-school dropout is being used by the administration of President Gloria Arroyo, with whom Pacquiao has always been allied. (The House seat he is running for is currently held by an Opposition politician.) Others say Pacquiao's enormous popularity has gone to his head. The overriding emotion, though, seems to be one of frustration. As a meat vendor in a local market said, "He's not a robber. Why does he want to be a politician?"

The pleas and the brickbats, however, have not swayed Pacquiao. He says his motivations are genuine.

"I have always been concerned about the people of South Cotabato, and if I get elected I will bring progress to my province," he said. As for people's concerns that the distractions of politics will hasten his decline in boxing, Pacquiao says there's nothing to worry about. "I believe that I can perform two tasks," he insists.

Fans will find out soon enough, as Pacquiao is scheduled to fight April 21 in Texas, and the election will be held just three weeks later.

Celebrities regularly jump into the Filipino political ring, and often perform well at the ballot box. The country elected to the presidency one movie action hero by a landslide, and another lost a disputed decision. The people of the Philippines, however, hold Pacquiao in a different light.

"Pacquiao's not an actor who became a hero in the movies," said veteran Filipino sportswriter Recah Trinidad. "He's a true, genuine Filipino hero. By being a party to a wretched political system, by associating himself with that most rotten of breeds, that myth will be shattered. He's not living up to what people expect of him.

"He can't help the people by being a politician. He can help them by being himself. By endorsing proper behavior. He can't change the system. He doesn't fully comprehend what he's getting into."

With the same swagger he exhibits in the ring, Pacquiao says there's no chance he'll change his mind.

"I will not back away from this fight," he said. "I don't take a backward step."

It's the kind of bravado that excites fans about Pacquiao the boxer, but it's making them nauseous about Pacquiao the politician.

—Ted Lerner

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquiao plans to join Philippine President Gloria Arroyo in the political arena

Mayweather "Belted," Oscar Bored

After launching an 11-city publicity tour on February 20 in New York City—complete with threats, pushing, and competing displays of rippling abs—the Oscar De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather road show stopped off in Philadelphia the next morning before heading to Washington, D.C., for a matinee.

The Philadelphia press conference was held at Temple University's Liacouras Center, which was, as Bernard Hopkins pointed out, an appropriate setting. Not just because the legendary Blue Horizon is located just a few blocks away, but also because it is right around the corner from the tough North Philly neighborhood where "The Executioner" grew up.

It was Hopkins, in his role as president of Golden Boy East, who entertained the early arriving media and spoke the longest once the official proceedings got underway. B-Hop was obviously in his element, hyping the May 5 showdown with a virtually non-stop barrage of verbiage.

De La Hoya seemed nowhere near as energized. Except for when he addressed the gathering, he wore a frown and seemed only moderately interested in what was going on around him. Maybe he's been through this sort of thing so often it's become a bit of a bore.

Mayweather, on the other hand, seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself. And why not? A fight with De La Hoya is something he's craved for years, as was an opportunity to knock off the man he felt had been given preferential treatment when both fought under the Top Rank banner.

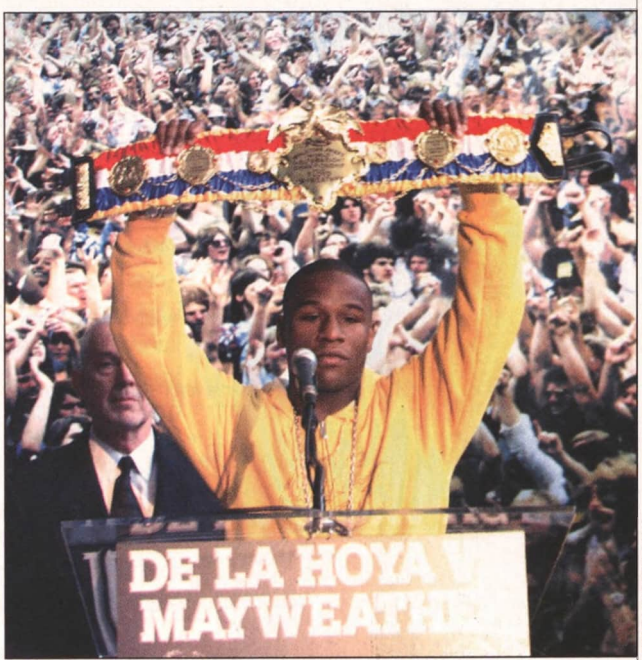


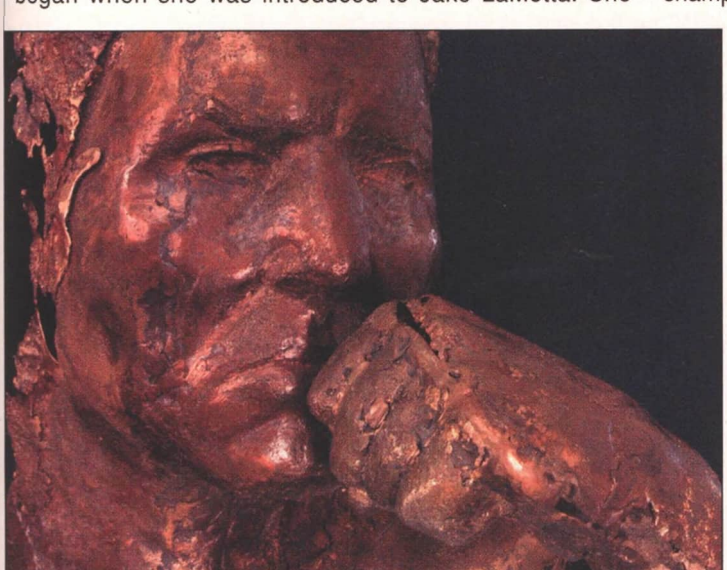
PHOTO BY STU SAKS

Pretty Boy show off his new RING belt

Another reason for "Pretty Boy's" effervescence was that he was finally taking possession of THE RING championship belt he won by taking the welterweight title away from Carlos Baldomir back in November 2006. True, he already owns plenty of bling, but for all his impish behavior, Floyd understands that are some shiny objects you can't buy in a jewelry store.

Chuvalo "Busted"

Sculpture Gabrielle F. Horvath's love affair with boxing began when she was introduced to Jake LaMotta. She ended up sculpting a bust of the former middleweight champion to commemorate his 70th birthday in 1996, and later the Canadian artist cast bronze fists of Archie Moore and Ken Norton. Most recently, she teamed up with former heavyweight contender George Chuvalo, of whom she made a life-sized bronze bust that was unveiled on February 19 at the Bloor Street Boxing & Fitness gym in Toronto.



Chuvalo is immortalized in bronze

"I made a direct impression of George's face," explained Horvath. "It's far more personal that way."

Horvath and Chuvalo hope to find an organization to auction off the sculpture with the proceeds going to The Fight Against Drugs. Chuvalo became involved in the anti-drug campaign after three of his sons became addicted to heroin. Two of them, Lee and Steven, died of overdoses, while a third, Jesse, committed suicide.

Horvath is interested in working with other boxers in order to raise funds for worthy causes. She can be contacted through her website: www.ghbronze.com

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By William Dettloff

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
1/25/07	Ulises Solis KO 8 Will Grigsby	Versus	jfl	B+	C	C
If Grigsby was looking for a reason to retire, Solis gave it to him; this couldn't have been fun						
1/25/07	Tye Fields W 10 Kendrick Releford	Versus	h	C	C+	C+
Are Bob Arum and Jesse Reid in a contest to see who can look more like Dracula?						
1/27/07	Richard Gutierrez KO 4 Teddy Reid	ESPN2	jm	C+	B+	C
When a guy quits after getting hammered the way Reid did here, you have to let it slide						
1/27/07	Kelly Pavlik KO 8 Jose Luis Zertuche	HBO	m	B-	B-	B
This was the kind of beating that ruins guys; Pavlik ready for the top dogs at 160						
1/27/07	Jorge Arce W 12 Julio Ler	HBO	fl	A-	C+	C+
If only Arce were a welterweight; or, hell, even a featherweight						
2/1/07	Dominick Guinn KO 2 Zuri Lawrence	ESPN2	h	C-	B-	C-
Don't get your hopes up; when Guinn wins impressively, it means he's gong to drop his next four						
2/1/07	Timothy Bradley W 8 Manuel Garnica	Showtime	jw	C+	B+	C+
Note to Manuel: When your ear looks like a kidney, it's time to hang 'em up						
2/1/07	James Kirkland KO 8 Billy Lydell	Showtime	jm	C	B-	C
When your strategy is to hope your equilibrium outlasts your opponent's fists, you have a problem						
2/2/07	Julio Diaz KO 3 Jesus Chavez	Showtime	l	A-	A	D
Can you imagine the outcry if they put those advertisements on a basketball court or football field?						
2/2/07	Chad Dawson W 12 Tomasz Adamek	Showtime	lh	A	B+	B-
You can call Adamek's postfight interview boring; we call it honest						
2/9/07	Rocky Juarez 5 Emmanuel Lucero	Telefutura	jl	B-	C-	C+
Anyone else remember when Lucero was considered a hot prospect?						
2/9/07	Chris Arreola KO 3 Zakeem Graham	ESPN2	h	C	C+	C
Until he gets near the top, Arreola is just going to outwork a lot of guys; good for him						
2/9/07	Eddie Chambers KO 7 Derrick Rossi	ESPN2	h	C+	B+	B
Chambers remind anyone else of a quicker, younger Lawrence Clay-Bey?						
2/10/07	Vivian Harris W 12 Juan Lazcano	HBO	jw	B+	B-	C+
If this were a football game, it would have set the record for number of turnovers by each side						
2/10/07	Shane Mosley W 12 Luis Collazo	HBO	w	A-	B-	B-
Okay, let's see what Mosley can do against the top guys in the division						
2/16/07	Verno Phillips W 12 Eddie Sanchez	ESPN2	jm	C+	C	C
Don't let that beanpole body fool you: Sanchez can fight, and Phillips was lucky to get the win						
2/16/07	Allen Conyers KO 2 Derek Ennis	Showtime	jm	C	A	B-
So what was the ref waiting for, Ennis' head to come unglued from his neck?						
2/16/07	Mike Oliver W 12 Gary Stark	Showtime	jf	C+	A	C+
We don't get what all the squawking is about; this could have gone either way						
2/17/07	Andre Berto KO 1 Norberto Bravo	HBO	w	C	C+	C-
*Is this the same guy who fought his heart out on **The Contender**?*						
2/17/07	Sechew Powell W 10 Ishe Smith	HBO	jm	B-	B+	C
You knew going in this wasn't going to be exciting; think of it as a poor man's Hopkins-Wright						
2/17/07	Paulie Malignaggi W 10 Edner Cherry	HBO	jw	B	B	C
Good performance, but Paulie—blue hair? That's so 1980s						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

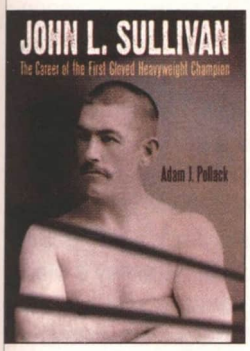
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino; Versus

Boxing Bookshelf

John L. Sullivan was America's first superstar athlete, but he fought so long ago—his heyday took place when the U.S. military was still fighting Indians—it's tempting to think of him in almost mythical terms, as if he were a Paul Bunyanesque figure strutting across the world like a flamboyant colossus. We have to remind ourselves now and then that Sullivan was every bit as real as a black eye.

Adam J. Pollack's new book, *John L. Sullivan: The Career Of The First Gloved Heavyweight Champion* (McFarland Press, 254 pages, softcover, $45) gives readers a heavily detailed overview of Sullivan's ring career. Unfortunately, Pollack's flavorless assemblage of old newspaper reports doesn't help us know what made Sullivan tick. We learn from several sources that Sullivan was a beast in the ring, and Pollack reminds us a dozen times that boxing was different 120 years ago, but that's all we learn.

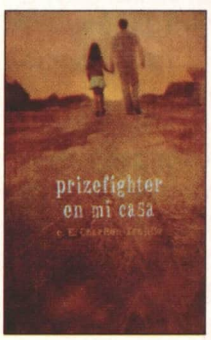


Sullivan merits the sort of treatment Jack Johnson received in George C. Wolfe's *Unforgivable Blackness*, or Randy Roberts' *Papa Jack*. Sullivan may not have had Johnson's historical impact, but in his day Sullivan was a bigger star, and he's largely responsible for popularizing boxing. Why writers haven't given him more consideration is a mystery.

Sullivan's later years deserved some coverage, especially considering the book's hefty price tag, but Pollack ends the story as soon as Sullivan loses the championship. Still, until an ambitious writer attempts a more full-bodied account of Sullivan's life, Pollack's book will be useful.

—Don Stradley

Without having made an exhaustive study of the subject, I would venture to guess that over the last 50 years the only halfway decent novels for adolescents with boxing themes were *The Contender* and its three sequels by Robert Lipsyte. But now his corner on that market has been dealt a whopping blow by *Prizefighter En Mi Casa* (Delacorte Press, 210 pages, hardcover, $15.95), a thoroughly engaging and insightful novel for teenagers by E. Charlton-Trujillo about a 12-year-old Mexican girl who confronts problems concerning her health, family, racism, and self-image with help from a very unlikely source. He is "El Jefe Del Diablo"—the boss of the Devil—Mexico's most fearsome boxer, who comes to Chula Sanchez' home in south Texas to train for a bootleg fight and help pull her family out of debt caused by a car accident that left her father in a wheelchair and caused her to suffer seizures that make her almost as frightening and repellent to others as the horrifying El Jefe himself (a "thick man the size of a bear with broken dusty knuckles and one eye covered with a chewed-up patch"). Also terrified of the monster at first—she locks her bedroom door and jams a chair under the doorknob with a statue of the Blessed Virgin as a doorstop—Chula comes to discover in him more humaneness than in members of her own family.



It is an instructive, touching, and hopeful journey that steers clear of the threadbare clichés and hokey exhortations afflicting too many adult boxing novels and most of the movies about a fictional Philadelphia punching bag who doesn't know when to quit. Nobody would ever put up a statue of El Jefe, but Ms. Charlton-Trujillo has given us a fighter worthy of one. My soon-to-be-14-year-old daughter thinks she's getting all books about baseball, her favorite sport, for her birthday. She's not. But I don't think she'll be disappointed.

—Pete Ehrmann

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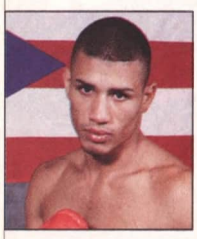
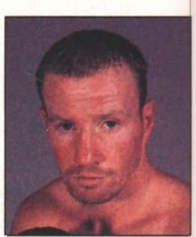
Outside the Ropes

For the third straight year, the Puerto Rican Boxing Commission has chosen **Miguel Cotto** as Puerto Rico's Fighter of the Year. Also honored at a ceremony held at the Embassy Suites in San Juan were Miguel's uncle, **Evangelista Cotto**, who was selected as Manager of the Year, and bantamweight **Jesus Rojas**, Prospect of the Year ... The **Boxing Writers Association of America** has announced its award winners for 2006, many of which mirror THE RING Annual Year-End Awards that were announced in the April '07 issue: **Manny Pacquiao** is the BWAA Fighter of the Year and his trainer, **Freddie Roach**, received the Futch-Condon Award as trainer of the year. The **Somsak Sithchatawal-Mahyar Monshipor** brawl was selected as Fight of the Year. Also honored were HBO's **Larry Merchant**, who received the James J. Walker Award for long and meritorious service, while Top Rank's public relations tandem of **Lee Samuels** and **Ricardo Jimenez** shared the Marvin Kohn Good Guy Award. Showtime's **Steve Albert** won the Sam Taub Award for excellence in broadcast journalism and **Muhammad Ali** took the Pat Putnam Award for Perseverance ... Nearly 50 years after it was removed from the physical education schedule, boxing is making a bit of a comeback in British schools, thanks to the support of the **Amateur Boxing Association of England** and **Boxing4Schools**, an organization fronted by former British heavyweight champion **Julius Francis**. Seven schools in the London borough of Bromley now offer after-hours boxing clubs, and the concept is already beginning to spread to Birmingham and Sheffield. The Royal Navy is backing the program to the tune of £200,000 ($389,996) ... Muhammad Ali has moved back to his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, where he has purchased a $1.8-million home ... It looks like the life of retired junior welterweight **Micky Ward** is going to be made into a major motion picture, with **Matt Damon** playing Ward and **Mark Wahlberg** in the roles of **Dick Ecklund**, Ward's half-brother and trainer. "I've been dying to do a boxing movie my whole career," said Wahlberg. "I've been close to doing two, and they kinda fell apart, but this is something I'm very excited about." The film will be produced by Manderville Films and released by Paramount Pictures ... A bill to establish a National Boxing Commission in the United States is being co-sponsored by Senators **John McCain** and **Byron Dorgan**. It was introduced on January 4 and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The new bill is very similar to one proposed in 2005, which died in committee and never became law ... Former world flyweight and bantamweight champion **Fighting Harada** prevailed in a battle for presidency of the Japanese Pro Boxing Association when former junior middleweight titleholder **Koichi Wajima** withdrew his candidacy ... The San Bernardino (California) County District Attorney's office will not file criminal charges against world cruiserweight champion **O'Neil Bell**, who was arrested on February 4 for allegedly throwing a hatchet and rocks at sparring partner **Larry Slayton** while doing roadwork near their training camp in Big Bear. Deputy District Attorney **Gary Roth** cited "lack of evidence" as the reason for not pressing charges ... German heavyweight **Axel Schulz**, 38, reportedly suffered a stroke three days after losing his comeback fight to **Brian Minto** on November 25, 2006. Schulz told the German newspaper *Bild* that seven months before the fight an EEG showed warning signs, but that the diagnosis wasn't certain and that several doctors he consulted told him he was fit to fight ... Manager **Bob Botto**, 73, died of a heart attack on February 15 in Swedesboro, New Jersey. Among the fighters Botto handled were bantamweight contender **Johnny Carter** (who unsuccessfully challenged WBA bantam titleholder **Jeff Chandler** in 1982), heavyweight journeyman **Randy Mack**, and welterweight **Mike Mungin**. At the time of his death, Botto managed super middleweight **Omar Pittman**. ... Japanese promoter **Hiroaki Tsuda**, 62, died of pneumonia on February 5 in Osaka. A former taxi driver, Tsuda promoted more than 20 title bouts. He also developed WBC 105-pound and WBA 108-pound titleholder **Hiroki Ioka** and WBA light flyweight titlist **Kriji Yamaguchi**. Tsuda suffered a brain hemorrhage in 1998 that left him partially paralyzed, but continued to promote until another stroke incapacitated him in 2005 ... Former British and Empire heavyweight champion Johnny Williams, 80, died on January 20 at the Willow Banks Nursing Home. He suffered from Alzheimer's disease the last 10 years of his life. Williams turned pro in 1946 and had his final fight in '56, compiling an overall record of 60-11-4 (38). After retiring from the ring, Williams became a farmer and livestock breeder. ■



Cotto: Win again



Ward: Movie in the works

Quotable

"I've been hitting people for 20 years, and this is therapy for me. A lot of people, I want to hit the hell out of them, so I just take it to the ring."

—Bernard Hopkins, explaining why he wants to continue fighting

"Oscar says I can't crack an egg. Well, 24 out of 37 eggs got cracked."

—Floyd Mayweather, replying to De La Hoya's denigration of his punching power

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended February 19, 2007

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: Chad Dawson jumps from 10th to fifth on the strength of his unanimous decision over Tomasz Adamek, who falls from fifth to sixth. Dawson's advancement also pushes down Paul Briggs (sixth last issue), Roy Jones (seventh last issue), Julio Gonzalez (eighth last issue), and Hugo Garay (ninth last issue) one notch each.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: Felix Sturm (seventh last issue) and Amin Asikainen (eighth last issue) trade places following Asikainen's win over Lorenzo DiGiacomo.
Junior Middleweights: Shane Mosley (first last issue) departs to campaign at welterweight, which allows everybody ranked below Mosley to climb up one rung each and also makes room for Joachim Alcine to debut at number 10.
Welterweights: Mosley is now number-two at 147 following his comprehensive decision over Luis Collazo, who slips from fifth to sixth. Mosley's return also forces down everybody rated second through ninth last issue one position, while Joshua Clottey (10th last issue) exits.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: Major movement as Zahir Raheem tumbles from third to sixth due to inactivity, Jesus Chavez falls from fourth to seventh after his TKO loss to second-ranked Julio Diaz, and Graham Earl departs after his kayo loss to Michael Katsidis, who replaces Earl at number nine. The shakeup also boosts David Diaz from fifth to third, Nate Campbell from sixth to fourth, and Almazbek Raiymkulov from seventh to fifth.
Junior Lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior Featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: No changes.
Junior Bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior Flyweights: Will Grigsby (sixth last issue) departs following his kayo loss to Ulises Solis. This pushes up everyone rated below him last issue one spot each and allows room for Giovanni Segura to debut at 10.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-For-Pound: Mosley replaces Miguel Cotto in the 10th position.

The RING
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Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
4. **Jermain Taylor**
   Middleweight
5. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
6. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
7. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
8. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
9. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Shane Mosley**
    Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
TheRing-online.com

[The Ring Ratings]

For Period Ended February 19, 2007

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

Michael Katsidis debuts in the ratings as the ninth-rated lightweight

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 47-3 (42)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 46-0 (34)
5. **SHANNON BRIGGS** Brooklyn, NY 48-4-1 (42)
6. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
7. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
8. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-6-3 (43)
9. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 22-0-1 (17)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-7-1 (28)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-3 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 35-2-1 (22)
3. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-3-1 (15)
4. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 32-0 (21)
5. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-4 (30)
6. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 38-2 (28)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-0 (19)
8. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 28-0 (18)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 38-0-1 (20)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 46-3-1 (35)
3. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
4. **RODOLFO LOPEZ** Mexico 19-3-1 (13)
5. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
6. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
7. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 26-0-1 (19)
8. **NICKY COOK** England 27-0 (15)
9. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 31-0-2 (22)
10. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 22-3-1 (12)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 41-3 (31)

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 25-2 (18)
2. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 29-1-1 (19)
3. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 46-2-1 (37)
4. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 30-1 (28)
5. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 25-0 (15)
6. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
7. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 23-0 (9)
8. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 33-5 (28)
9. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 26-3 (17)
10. **BERNARD DUNNE** Ireland 22-0 (13)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 36-3 (32)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 21-2 (7)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 52-3-2 (37)
4. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-1 (6)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 19-2 (15)
6. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 67-9 (44)
7. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-5 (20)
8. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 33-1 (24)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 23-1 (9)
10. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 26-1 (17)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 37-1 (27)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-1 (10)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 32-3 (22)
4. **DAVID HAYE**
England 18-1 (17)
5. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 23-0-1 (16)
6. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 25-1 (19)
7. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 26-3-1 (18)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 18-0 (13)
9. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 14-0 (10)
10. **VIRGIL HILL**
Willison, ND 50-5 (23)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 24-4 (18)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 25-0 (15)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-11-2 (29)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 24-0 (15)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 31-1 (21)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
8. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 50-4 (38)
9. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
10. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 27-2 (14)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 42-0 (31)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 38-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 27-3 (21)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 24-0 (18)
6. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 19-0 (16)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 20-0 (16)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 23-0 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 29-0 (22)
10. **PETER MANFREDO JR.**
Pawtucket, RI 26-3 (12)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 26-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 22-0 (17)
3. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 27-1 (24)
4. **MARIANO CARRERA**
Argentina 30-4 (21)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 61-7 (41)
6. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-8 (13)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 20-0 (14)
8. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 26-2 (12)
9. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 24-2 (11)
10. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 30-0 (27)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 37-0 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 34-4 (24)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-4 (37)
3. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 43-10-6 (13)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (23)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
6. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 27-1 (25)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-3 (12)
9. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-8 (31)
10. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 32-0 (24)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 42-0 (30)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 55-7-1 (47)
2. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 35-1-2 (20)
3. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-2-1 (18)
4. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 44-8-1 (29)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-1 (20)
6. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, DC 31-5-1 (17)
7. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
8. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 25-0-1 (10)
9. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 21-1 (12)
10. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 15-1 (9)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 31-0 (15)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-3 (25)
3. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 32-1-1 (17)
4. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 29-5-1 (24)
5. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 24-1-1 (14)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-2 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-4 (29)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 24-2 (13)
9. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 22-0 (20)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 18-2 (12)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 43-3-2 (34)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-4 (42)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 27-0 (17)
4. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-5 (34)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 46-3-1 (33)
6. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 21-0 (21)
7. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 27-3 (19)
8. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)
9. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)
10. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 24-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 10-0 (5)
2. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-2 (16)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-2-1 (24)
5. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 30-3-2 (12)
6. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
7. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 46-3-1 (35)
8. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-6 (20)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 24-2 (10)
10. **PRAMUANSAK POSUWAN**
Thailand 35-1-1 (19)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 64-2 (33)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 27-0 (21)
4. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 23-0-2 (15)
5. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 21-1 (8)
6. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-1 (17)
7. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 28-4-1 (13)
8. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 39-14-3 (22)
9. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 36-1-1 (28)
10. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 30-2-2 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: HUGO CAZARES
Mexico 24-3-1 (18)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 23-1-2 (17)
2. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 20-5-1 (16)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-3-2 (13)
4. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-2 (10)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-1-1 (12)
6. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-5-1 (20)
7. **NOBUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 23-3-1 (3)
8. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 14-0-2 (7)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 26-5 (14)
10. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 17-0-1 (13)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 20-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-5-5 (31)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 17-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-2 (7)
6. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 37-4-1 (30)
7. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-1 (18)
8. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-8-3 (13)
9. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 21-1-1 (13)
10. **PORNSAWAN KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 17-0 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

A Pound (-For-Pound) Of Phony Baloney

From Sugar Ray Robinson's name to Howard Cosell's hair, from Jake LaMotta's being upset by Billy Fox to the U.S. Boxing Championships of the '70s, from Luis Resto's punching power against Billy Collins Jr. to Roberto Duran's inability to understand English during interviews, boxing has a long history of phoniness. Heck, if you added up all of the grains of salt boxing requires its followers to take along with so many things they see and hear, you'd have enough salt to de-ice Interstate 78 for a decade.

So perhaps we can't get too upset over the phony foolishness put forth by Oscar De La Hoya and the critics of a proposed Vitali Klitschko comeback bout vs. Oleg Maskaev. After all, De La Hoya and the cuckoo columnists aren't tanking a fight or taking the padding out of their gloves, so their fakery is harmless. Nonetheless, it's infuriating.

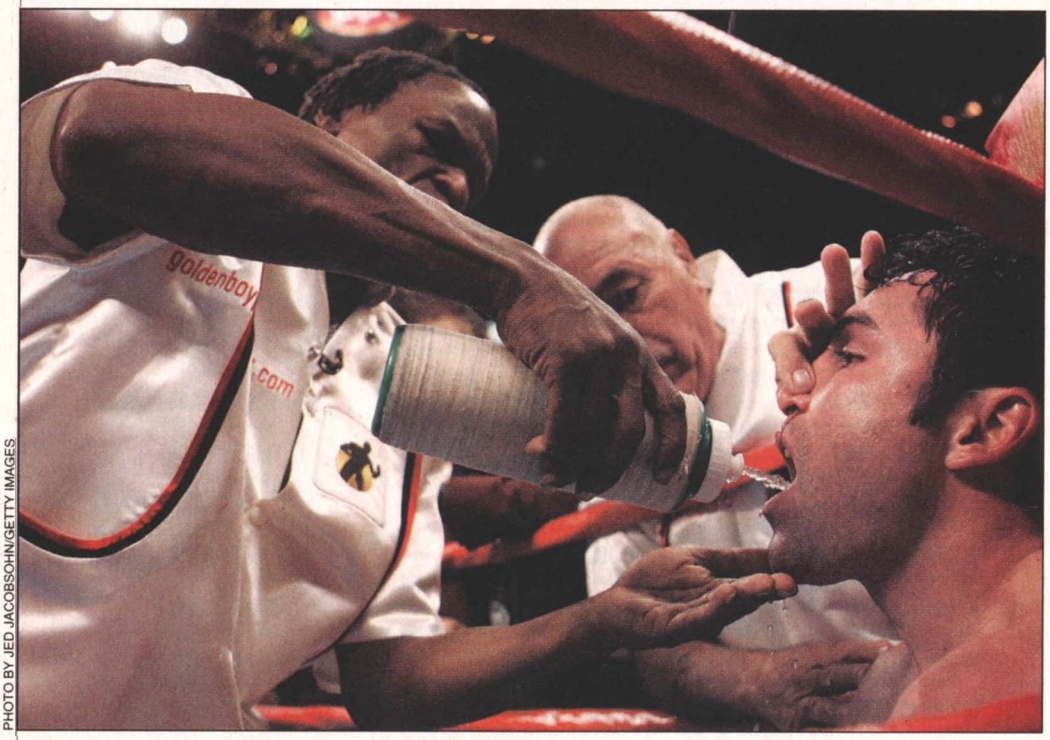
Let's start with De La Hoya, whose May 5 match with Floyd Mayweather is the most eagerly awaited battle of the young year and, potentially, the best clash we'll see in 2007. Though a superfight of this magnitude didn't need any saucy subplots to sell tickets, register pay-per-view buys, or remind *Sports Illustrated* that the boxing industry is still in business, oh, what a subplot it had. Floyd Mayweather Sr. would be training De La Hoya to, he hoped, beat up Floyd Jr. (If this was the plot of *Rocky VII*, we'd call it implausible.)

It would be yet another captivating example of why the fight game is a sport like no other. (This wouldn't be Roger Clemens pitching against his son in spring training. It would be a father trying to get his son kayoed.) Intrigue would hang over the bout like a cloud of funny smoke over a reggae concert. Just think what the knowledge that Daddy was devising a strategy to derail his biggest moment might do to Junior's psyche? Then again, that's *if* Daddy was really plotting Junior's demise. *Hmmm.* Maybe Senior, despite the estrangement from his son, would feel family ties pulling at him and double-cross De La Hoya by withholding key advice or strategy.

It would have given us all a lot to talk about, but, unfortunately it now gets filed away with all of the other great boxing what-ifs, relegated to sharing shelf space with a Roberto Duran-Alexis Arguello fight, a well-behaved Tony Ayala, and a Muhammad Ali who was never exiled for 3½ years of his prime. "The Golden Boy" decided he didn't want his longtime trainer in the corner this time, and instead opted for Freddie Roach.

De La Hoya was within his rights to dump Mayweather, but it's the original reason his team gave for the move that insulted our intelligence. Richard Schaefer, the CEO of Golden Boy Promotions, told the *New York Post*, "We were afraid these sideline stories might turn this great event into a circus. Oscar and Floyd are two great fighters and they deserve to have the spotlight on them and not on what's going on around them."

What a bunch of malarkey. This from a camp that consented to taking part in *De La Hoya/Mayweather 24/7*, an HBO reality series for which the cable net-



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What's the real reason Oscar ditched Big Floyd?

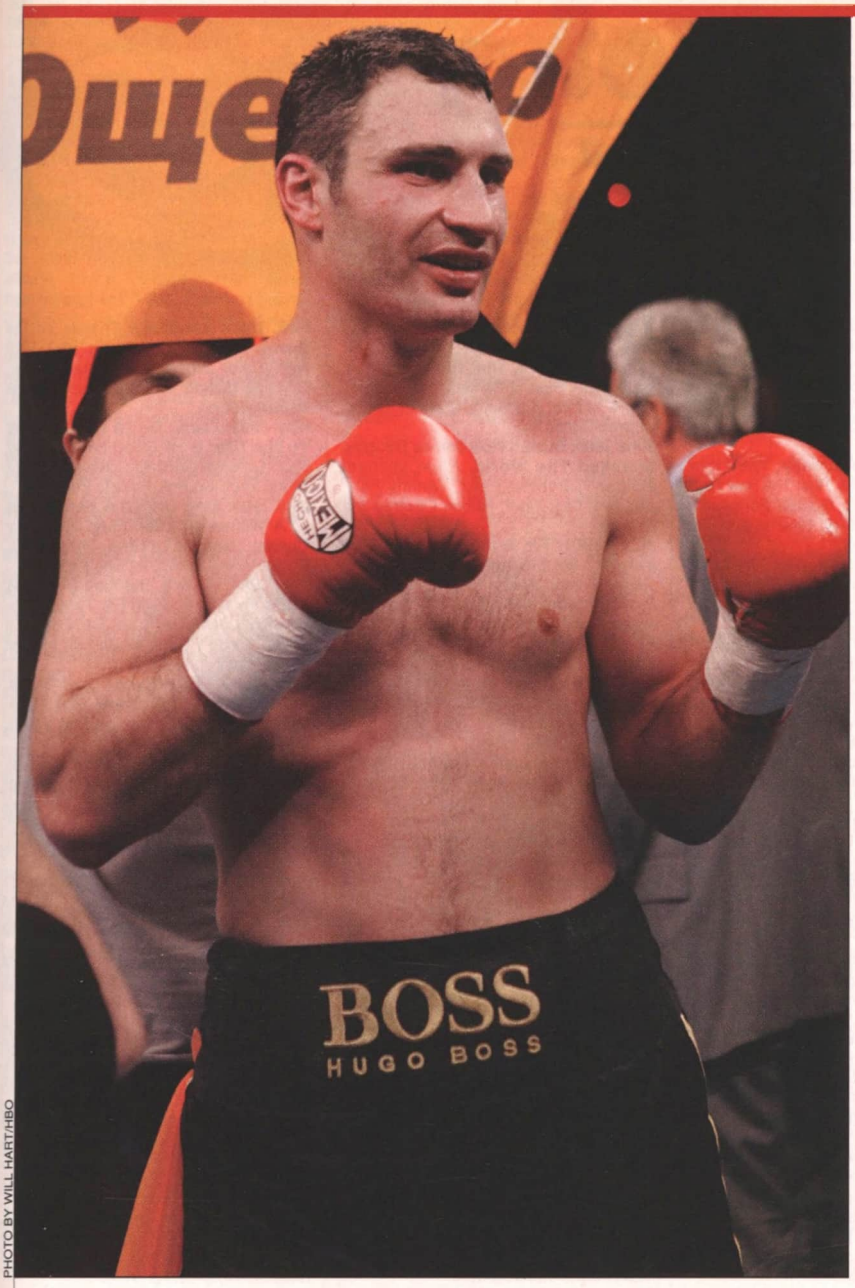

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ryan favors Vitali getting an instant match with Maskaev

work had unprecedented access to De La Hoya throughout his training. Talk about distractions and a circus. And are we really supposed to believe that De La Hoya, a full-time *promoter* and only part-time fighter these days, wouldn't salivate at the prospect of how much the Senior vs. Junior angle would add to the hype and drive up pay-per-view sales? To his credit, De La Hoya admitted a few days later that he was indeed concerned that Mayweather Sr. might not be "passionate about going for that knockout," but by that time, the Golden Boy and his brain trust had already come off as looking like b.s. artists.

No more so, however, than the writers that were ready to organize protest marches and go on hunger strikes in support of Samuel Peter. (No, wait a second. These are *boxing writers* we're talking about. Instead of going on hunger strikes, make that cutting down to a pack-and-a-half of cigarettes and three shots of whiskey a day.) The scribes were upset that former WBC heavyweight king Vitali Klitschko, who is ending his retirement, was making plans for an immediate shot at current WBC titlist Maskaev, basically cutting the line in front of mandatory contender Peter.

These are some of the same guys, of course, who lamented Klitschko's retirement in 2005, whining how the division had lost the one guy who had a chance of succeeding Lennox Lewis and actually surviving on the throne for a respectable period of time. The same writers who gripe all the time how the heavyweight ranks are a wasteland tied up with meaningless matchups and desperately in need of a new star. Well, here comes a new/old star, and they want him to travel the tuneup road before getting a sniff at the top.

Hey, Klitschko is 35 years old. Peter is 26. Making the Ukrainian wait for a lousy alphabet title shot is akin to tennis' computer ranking Serena Williams 81st in the world because she sat out large stretches of 2006 with an injury. Everybody knew Williams wasn't deserving of such a low ranking, and she proved that when she won the Australian Open this past January. And Klitschko shouldn't be made to stand in line just because Peter decisioned a fat, immobile, unmotivated James Toney twice. Before defeating Toney, let's not forget, Peter couldn't beat Vitali's brother, Wladimir, despite flooring the giant three times.

As we went to press, the WBC was going to rely on "compulsory mediation" (whatever that is) to determine if Klitschko or Peter deserves the crack at Maskaev. The decision should be simple: Give the shot to Klitschko, who never actually lost his WBC belt in the ring, and then force the winner of Klitschko-Maskaev to defend against Peter next. (Has the WBC forgotten that Klitschko is its Champion Emeritus? If that designation doesn't make him worthy of an immediate chance to regain his old crown, then what *does* it mean?)

And, my fellow members of the media, please stop with the hypocrisy. Where is your outrage when Bernard Hopkins talks about landing an instant heavyweight or super middleweight title shot straight out of retirement? Where was your indignation when Roy Jones got a shot at John Ruiz' WBA crown in Jones' first-ever heavyweight bout?

The sad part about Team De La Hoya and the scribbling scribes slinging their bull isn't that they're working overtime at the controls of the steam shovel. It's that they think they can dump a few big piles of you-know-what at our feet without us noticing the smell. ■

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By Ivan Goldman

New Phenomenon: Calling Out Margarito

Tough, hard-hitting. and possibly indestructible, Antonio Margarito has been knocking on the door to big fights and big money for so long it's amazing he has any knuckles left to fight with. Weighing risk versus reward, Floyd Mayweather, Oscar De La Hoya, and Zab Judah are among those who refused to acknowledge him.

But as I write this, up-and-coming southpaw beanpole Paul Williams and popular kayo artist Miguel Cotto are both looking to fight Margarito. In fact, he somehow got involved in conflicting deals with them both, creating a dispute that involves claims and counter-claims among at least two promoters, two alphabet gangs, and various management teams. It looks like Margarito's opponent will have to be decided by a court. Everything should be sorted out by the time you read this, but the way things are going, everyone in this sport will have to carry around lawyers the same way drivers keep a spare tire in the trunk.

Amazing how a feared fighter like Margarito can put on one sloppy performance in Atlantic City against Joshua Clottey and suddenly the seas part and he's got a clear, unobstructed path to the Promised Land. It's like watching the school's hottest cheerleaders dive into a hair-pulling battle for a date with a nerd they never used to give the time of day. For a maximum test of skills and fury, I lean toward Margarito vs. Cotto. Then throw Williams, Floyd Mayweather, and forever-young Shane Mosley into a round

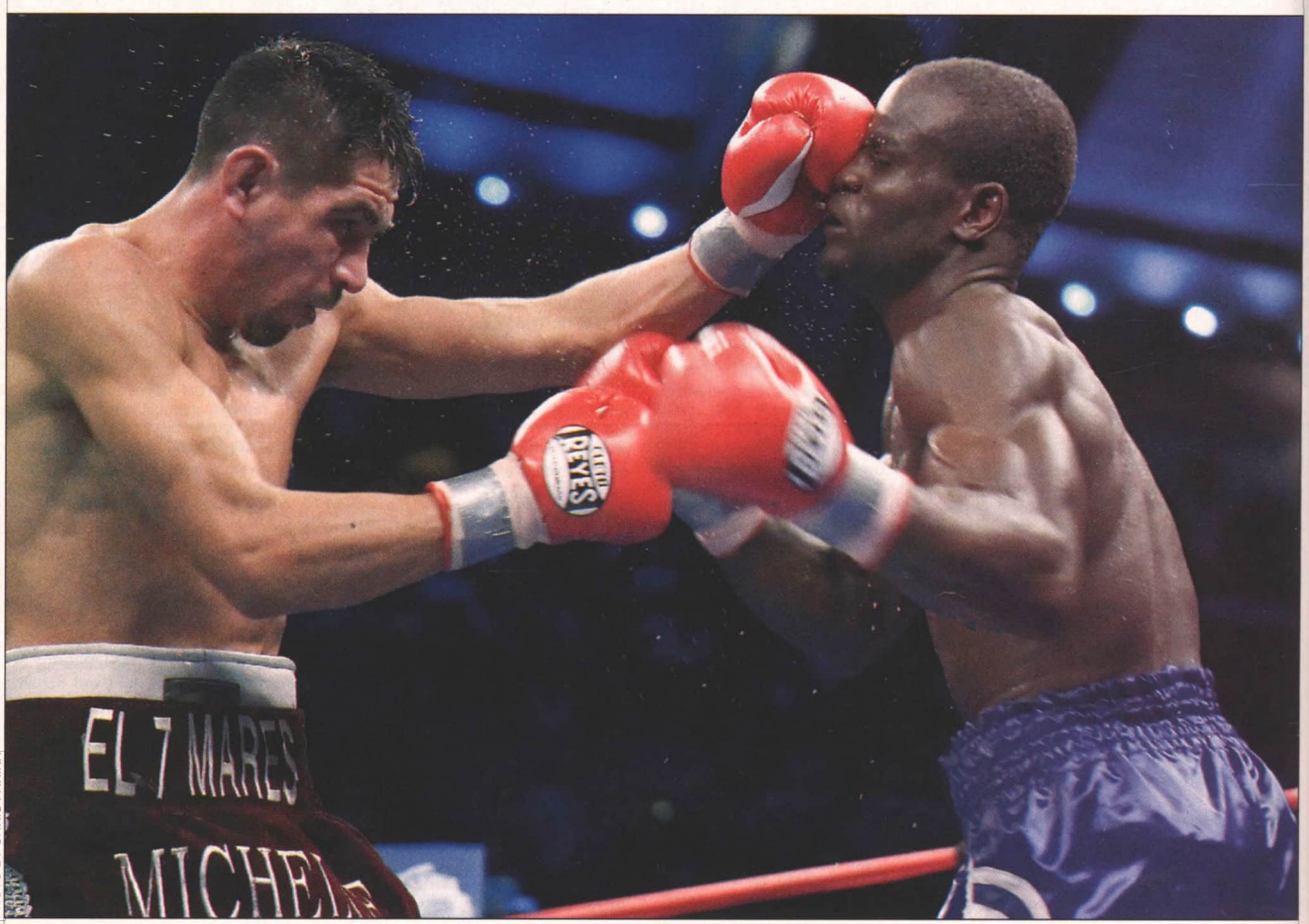
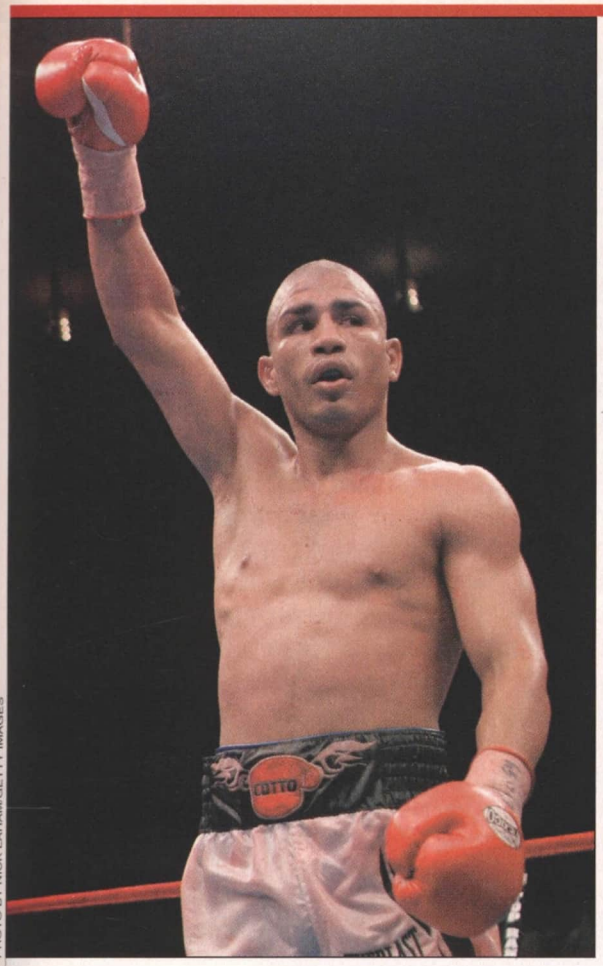


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

After Margarito struggled to beat Clottey, suddenly everybody wanted to fight him



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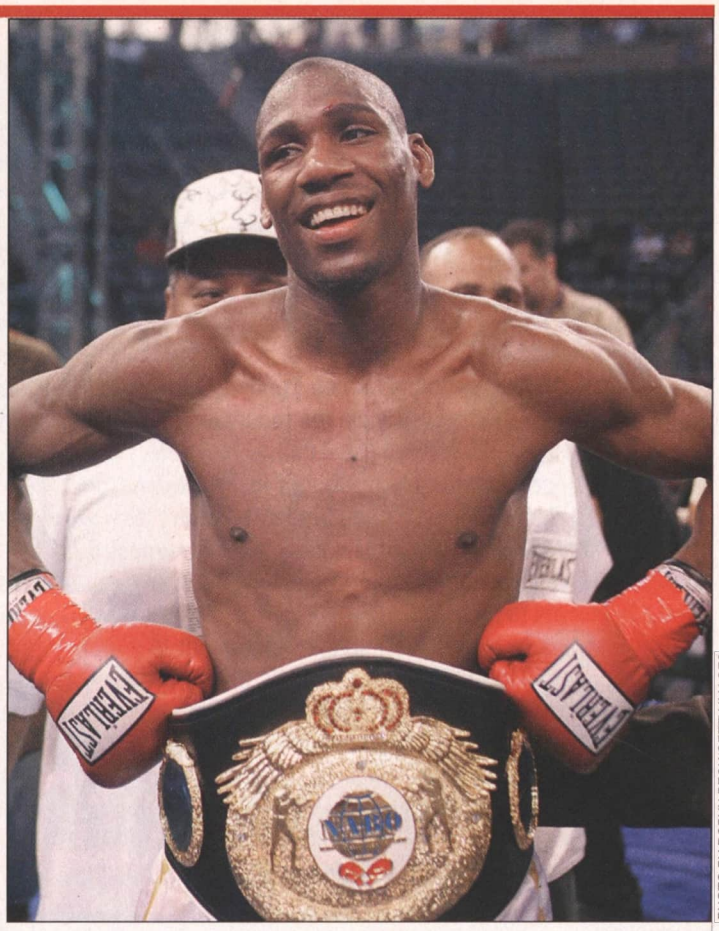

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/GETTY IMAGES

It looks like Cotto (left) will fight Judah, while Williams (above) gets Margarito

robin with them.

Although it's not always easy to figure out who's backing away from whom in the call-out game, Mayweather's assertion that Mosley ducked him leaves out important details. Mosley ducks no one. Another warrior eager to take on the best is Ricky Hatton, who gave up his IBF junior welterweight title to get a match with Jose Luis Castillo. No fighter who seeks out Castillo is looking for a soft touch unless he's also soft in the head, which Hatton is not.

Meanwhile, Hatton deserves recognition for mooning the HBO camera that followed him into the gym while he trained for Juan Urango. His timing and delivery were outstanding. HBO deserves a pat on the back for showing it, thereby providing terrific laughs for vulgarians like me.

Casinos vs. Cities: Ever notice that *ShoBox* seems to do nearly all its shows from Indian casinos you can't even find on a map? Steve Farhood and Nick Charles probably speak five or six native-American languages by now. (I'm kidding, of course. Should you find an Indian in one of these places, he's likely to hail from India.)

ShoBox's distant venues exemplify a trend that urban fight fans understand too well. Even huge metropolises like Chicago and Los Angeles can barely compete for fight cards against a casino infrastructure willing to sweeten the promoter's deal so more customers can be lured out to sagebrush country.

In L.A., longtime fight venues The Olympic and The Forum have both been turned into (no kidding) churches, one of which also bought and closed the city's largest boxing gym adjoining the Olympic. There was no plot against boxing here, but no one did much to help it either. Churches eager to take on the devil should give boxing a break and take a hard look at golf. To find serious blasphemy, listen to your average Sunday morning golfer slicing into a sand trap.

But city venues are still a live option. Top Rank's Lee Samuels called the turnout "phenomenal" when 7,091 fans showed up at the Honda Center (formerly Arrowhead Pond) in Anaheim, California, to see bantam ace Jorge Arce decision rope-a-doper Julio Ler. (The first arena owner to sell naming rights to a corporation probably was former boxing promoter Jerry Buss, when he let a now-defunct bank put its label on the Great Western Forum.)

Anyway, Anaheim is not exactly the center of L.A., but at least you don't have to consult Lewis and Clark trail maps to find it. Consider that most of the crowd could have stayed home and watched two of the fights on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*. Perhaps they couldn't resist the charm of paying 12 bucks to park.

"We'll be back," Samuels said of the Honda Center, promising even bigger cards. Although Arce-Ler was no barnburner, Kelly Pavlik's fierce battle with and eighth-round stoppage of Jose Luis Zertouche made the trip worthwhile.

Pavlik is trying to butt in line to fight middleweight champion Jermain Taylor *(see feature on page 64)*.

Compare the committed fans in Anaheim, so many of whom showed up for the early bouts, to the lethargic crowd of 5,700 who watched Mosley defeat Luis Collazo at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. People whose tickets entitled them to see Vivian Harris outpoint Juan Lazcano in the co-feature, but didn't enter the arena until the main event, aren't fans. They're attendees.

No Respect: Fighting James Toney is like climbing a killer mountain. And all the while the mountain is laughing at you. But at age 38, it looks like Toney's mojo has finally run out of juice. Thoroughly outfought in his second go-around with Samuel Peter, Toney proved he didn't lose an ounce of attitude when he proclaimed, "I don't respect no one." Yet Toney can be one of the most likable nasty guys you'd ever want to meet.

He also made a more formidable fighter out of Peter, who discovered in their first match that swinging for the fences won't work against someone really slick and really tough. So, for the sequel, Peter trained like the devil, did his homework, employed better balance, fought shrewdly, and even backed away from his unfortunate tendency to slam his opponent behind the head and neck.

I used to feel sympathy and downright sorrow for all the great champions who, at the end of their careers, end up humiliated in the ring. But over time I came to realize they're just following their risk-taking instincts. If they see even a slight chance of catching an opponent napping, they want to try. And if they end up getting their butts kicked, well that's the way the cards fell.

Police Blotter: HBO earns a Futch Award for wisely letting Jim Lampley continue working after he was charged with domestic violence against his girlfriend. For unacceptable behavior by a sportscaster, Lampley was never in danger of exceeding the mark set by Marv Albert, who once pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault and battery for biting a woman on the back.

We can disapprove of behavior without demanding that the behavior cost someone his livelihood. When the line is crossed, we'll know it when we see it, as courts say about pornography. If by some wild chance an astronaut, for instance, was accused of putting on diapers and a goofy disguise and driving halfway across the country to assault a rival in a love triangle, we wouldn't want her operating heavy space machinery.

Meanwhile, over in Arizona, a zealous prosecutor was seeking to imprison Mike Tyson on charges of cocaine possession and driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Even though previous convictions were for unrelated

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Harris and Lazcano battled in front of empty seats

PHOTO BY MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES

Toney's mojo isn't working anymore

crimes, Tyson, being a felon, was threatened by a more severe sentence. Driving impaired is a serious infraction, but, fortunately, there was no collision, no injury. Rather than stick him in a cage for years, why not remove his driving privileges and monitor his substance-abuse treatment?

MAGOO 1: Referee Wayne Kelly snatched victory from heavyweight Rodney Ray with two errors in round two of the heavyweight match between Costa Philippou and Ray in Selden, New York. He officiously took an unnecessary point from Ray for holding and failed to score a clean knockdown caused by a terrific right uppercut from Ray. Especially in a four-rounder, two points in error are huge. If the fight had been refereed properly, the two judges who scored it 38-37 Philippou would have had it the other way.

Kelly hectored Ray repeatedly, but barely noticed the other guy was also holding and landing shots to the back of the head. It was just a little four-rounder on ESPN2, and I doubt either man will be a contender, but fighters deserve better officiating than this.

MAGOO 2: Trainer and ESPN2 analyst Teddy Atlas is one of the best-loved guys in boxing. He's knowledgeable, committed, and does great work for a charity he named after his father. But he repeats himself over and over. Viewers want an analyst to say it once, say it right, and go on to something else. Too many writers complain about Lennox Lewis' perfectly acceptable commentary, but give a pass to Atlas, whose faults glare like the Vegas Strip. ■

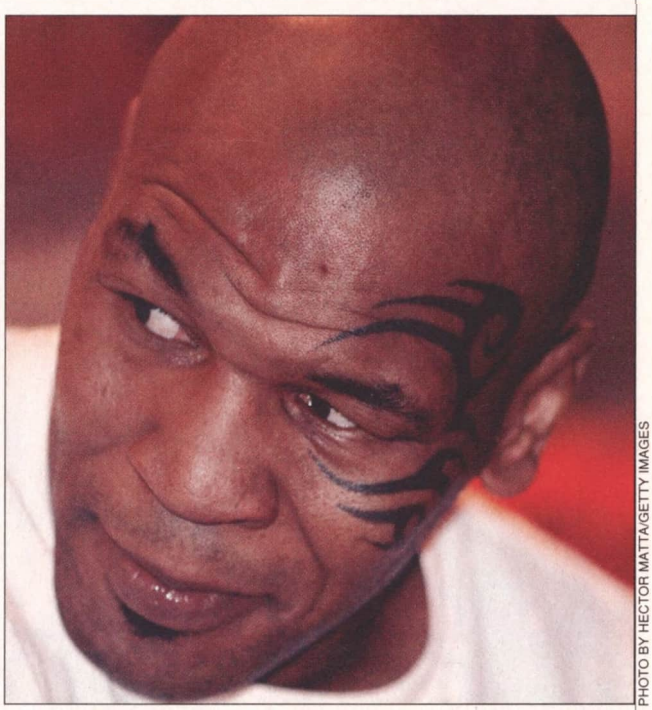

PHOTO BY HECTOR MATTA/GETTY IMAGES

Goldman says Tyson doesn't deserve jail time

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY EVGEN KRAWS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

It's not the most traditional rehab assignment we've ever seen, but Vitali Klitschko insists on rebuilding his injured knee by resting 40-pound kindergarteners on it. Actually, the former heavyweight champ was visiting a class in Lviv, Ukraine, to read them a fairy tale—and no, it wasn't a story about what a "champion emeritus" is, although that certainly would be one heck of a fantasy tale that would appeal to the kids' active imaginations.

Step aside, Stephen King. Shove over, John Grisham. There's a new literary giant in town—well, at least there's a new giant trying to be literary—and his name is Nicolay Valuev. The 7'2" heavyweight has penned an autobiography, and he's more than happy to sign your copy for you. And no need to worry, the back cover of the book isn't covered in hair.

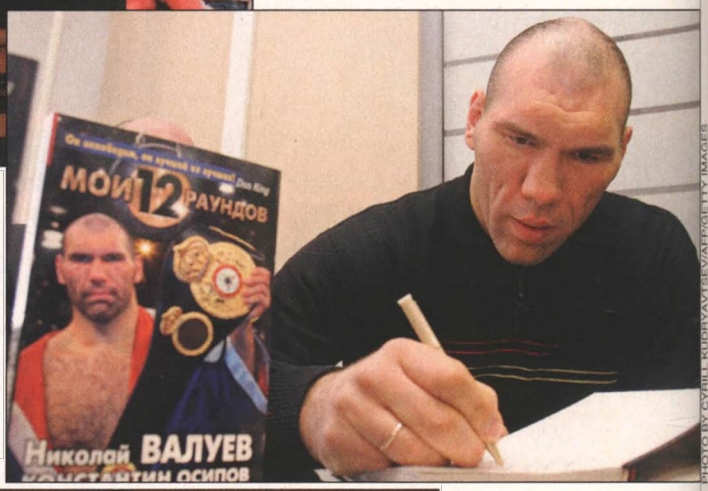

PHOTO BY CYRIL KOURYAVTSEV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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As if it isn't cool enough that she gets to call Muhammad Ali "Dad," now Laila Ali gets to hang out with Nelson Mandela. Not a bad life. You know what else isn't bad? Getting to fight hopeless opponents like Gwendolyn O'Neil, whom Ali had already knocked out in three rounds a couple of years ago. Ali went to South Africa to whup her again (this time in one round), and got to chill with Mandela while she was in town.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Raise your hand if you think you're the best-dressed ex-boxer on the stage! Apparently Ken Norton and Joe Frazier are a little more confident than Lucia Rijker and Ray Mancini—and considering Lucia's bizarre zebra-print number and "Boom Boom's" blinding button-down, we can't blame them for being confident. (By the way, yes, we're counting Rijker as an "ex-boxer" at this point.)

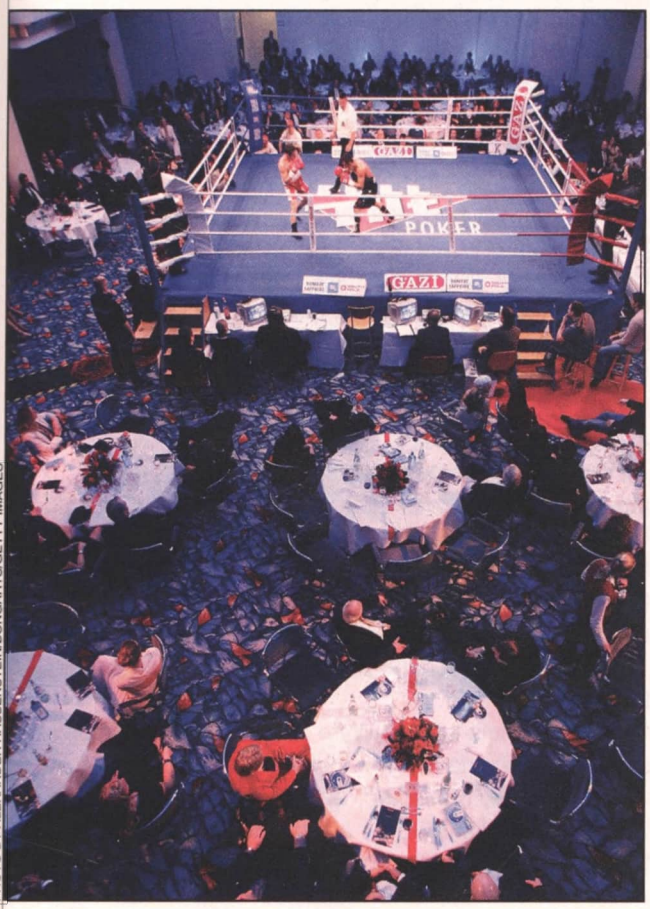

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

You know what would go well really well with that main course? The blood, sweat, and snot of a boxer! In Hamburg, Germany, apparently they don't mind bodily secretions spraying on their food, so the Grand Elysee Hotel hosted Dinner & Boxing night in February. This is one card where a seat in the second row is probably preferable to the front row.

PHOTO BY VLADIMIR RYS/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Apparently female flyweight Susianna Kentikian got hit so hard that she thinks she's in a nightclub, not a boxing ring. Or maybe she got so drunk at a nightclub that she put on gloves and got into a fight. Or maybe she just scored a knockout over Carolina Alvarez and felt an overwhelming urge to bust a move. We'll let you decide which option you like the best.

By Joe Santoliquito

Bermane Stiverne Heavyweight

Nerves gripped Bername Stiverne as he sat there waiting impatiently. He could not exactly figure out what to do with his shaking hands or feet. His eyes scanned the full locker room, yet he felt alone, his eyes darting back down at his gloved fists. No help there. His feet tapped up and down incessantly like a piston churning in an engine.

Myriad questions gnawed at him: *What if I lose? What if I win? What the hell am I doing here?* Then came the words that he'd been waiting for with a combination of anticipation and dread: "Stiverne, get ready, you're up next!" Stiverne was about to step into the ring for his first fight. The opponent he was about to face had 45.

That's when Stiverne banished the doubts from his mind and replaced them with: *Let's do this!*

Stiverne lost his first bout, a decision determined by total punches thrown in an amateur bout against a Golden Gloves champion, but the 6'2" 245-pound Las Vegas-based heavyweight hasn't lost much since then.

Since he turned professional, it's Stiverne's opponents who look for refuge before facing the Canadian-born powerpuncher of Haitian heritage. He's 10-0, each victory coming by knockout, eight in the first round.

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DON KING PROMOTIONS

Pro Record

2005		
July 29	Roy Matthews, North Charleston, SC	KO 1
Sept. 9	Benny Bland, Morgantown, WV	KO 1
Oct. 27	Gary Lavender, North Charleston	KO 1
Dec. 1	James Harrison, North Charleston	KO 1
2006		
Jan. 7	John Turlington, New York, NY	KO 1
April 8	Marcus Dear, Las Vegas, NV	KO 3
July 8	Franklin Lawrence, St. Louis, MO	KO 1
Oct. 7	Charles Brown, Rosemont, IL	KO 2
2007		
Jan. 6	Otis Mills, Hollywood, FL	KO 1
Feb. 3	Harold Sconiers, Kissimmee, FL	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
10	10	0	0	10

Still, Stiverne likes to go back to that first amateur bout, on November 6, 1998. It's what steered him into choosing boxing as a career. It erased doubt and confirmed skills. Stiverne, who turned 30 in January, was a 21-year-old then, just learning the sport. But his prefight jitters disappeared as soon he stood up and walked to the ring.

"The hardest part was the two hours before the fight, just waiting there, and waiting," recalled Stiverne, in a slight Haitian accent. "I'm a laid-back guy. I never get that way. But back then everything was new. I knew I'd trained hard, but all I did was spar. I never thought I'd actually get into the ring one day and hit someone for real. Oh, I was nervous. I kept thinking, was this the right thing for me, did I make the right choice?"

That choice would come against Jonathan Lheureux a regional Golden Gloves titlist from Canada. "B-Ware" stung his opponent early with a right to the face, bloodying Lheureux' nose. Though the scored ended up 4-4, with Lheureux holding a 56-55 edge in punches thrown to earn a narrow decision, Stiverne came away pleased—and hooked.

"I wasn't disappointed; I knew then that I wanted to fight," Stiverne said.

Three months later, B-Ware fought Lheureux again and stopped him in one round.

"From there, it seemed, everything happened so fast," he said. "Now I'm 10-0 as a pro doing something I never thought I'd be doing, I'm fighting for a living."

Born in Canada, Stiverne moved to Haiti when he was two. He dabbled in contact sports like karate as a child, first in Haiti, then in Brooklyn, New York, where he moved with his family when he was 14. Football, however, was his first

(Continued on Page 90)

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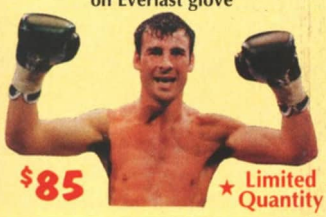

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★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
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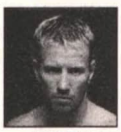

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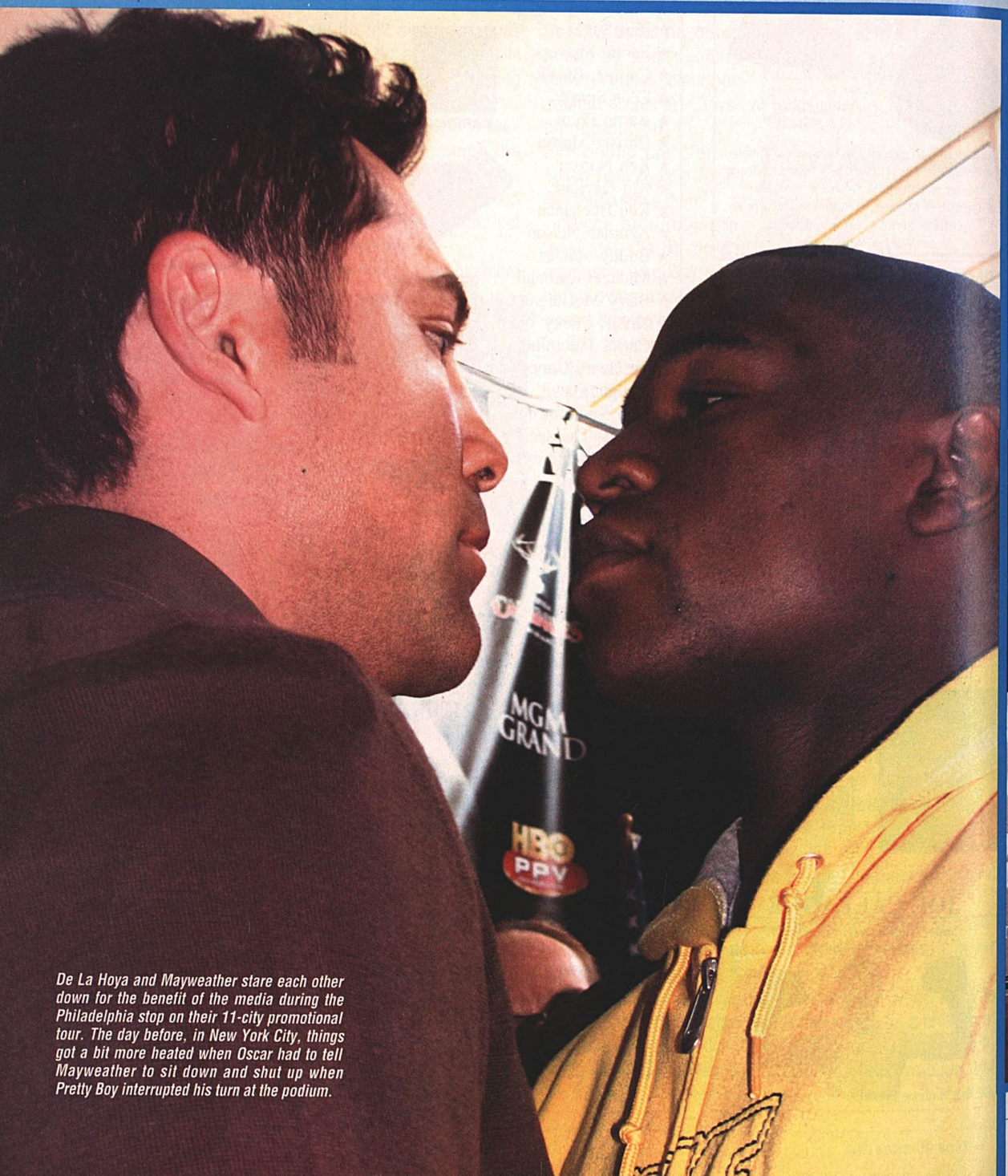


De La Hoya and Mayweather stare each other down for the benefit of the media during the Philadelphia stop on their 11-city promotional tour. The day before, in New York City, things got a bit more heated when Oscar had to tell Mayweather to sit down and shut up when Pretty Boy interrupted his turn at the podium.

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

By William Dettloff

Generally, prizefighters are terrible handicappers. Ask one some time to go on record picking a winner and he becomes a politician, tiptoeing around an answer and not committing to anything. You can't really blame him. Maybe he's in line to get the winner, and if he picks the wrong guy, maybe the other guy gets ticked off at him and doesn't give him the fight. A little thing like that could ruin a nice payday. Guys feed their families doing this.

Other guys will give you a prediction, but it's so colored by self-interest you can't take it seriously. And you can't blame them for that either. The best guys to get are retired, respected, articulate former fighters who have been in there with both guys, know them well, don't owe anybody anything, and don't have an obvious ax to grind.

In September 1995, former WBA super featherweight titlist Genaro Hernandez, who had never lost a fight at 130 pounds, jumped up to 135

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

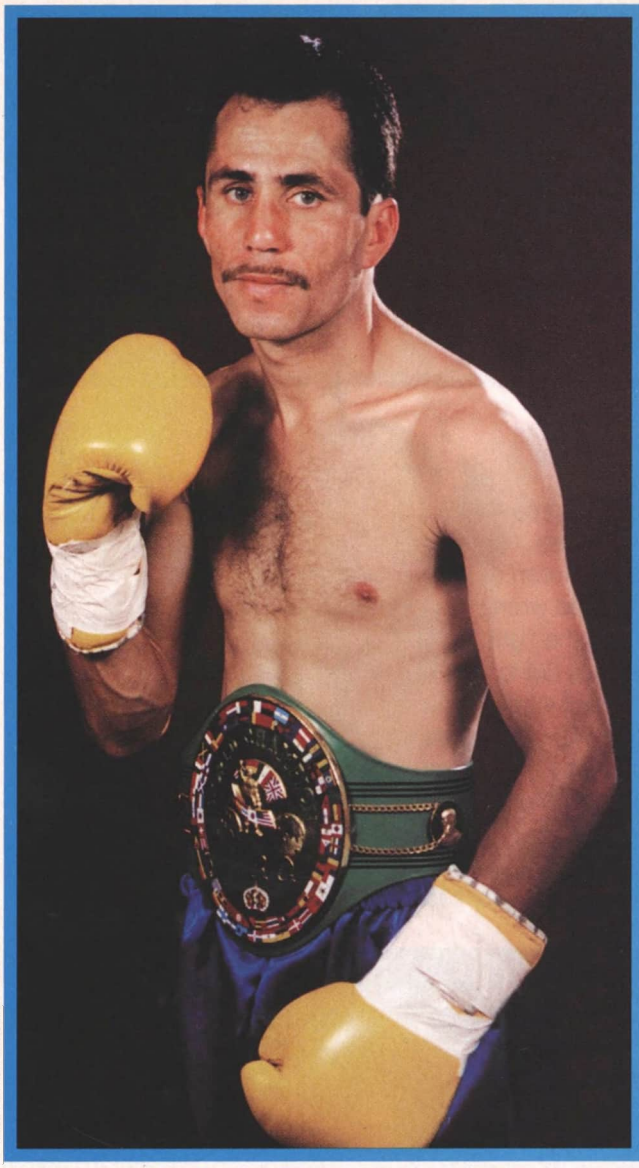


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

PHOTO BY RAT BAILEY

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Former WBC junior lightweight titleholder Genaro Hernandez (above left) mixed it up with De La Hoya (top right) and Mayweather (above right), and although he lost to both, "Chicanito" has numerous insights into their upcoming bout and thinks he knows who will emerge the victorious.

and took on Oscar De La Hoya in a fight that did 220,000 pay-per-view buys. He held his own early, but De La Hoya was too strong. He broke through with an uppercut that shattered Hernandez' nose and led to a sixth-round stoppage. Hernandez went back down to 130 where he was more effective and reeled off six straight title defenses over the likes of Carlos Hernandez, Carlos Gerena, and an aged Azumah Nelson. In October '98, he defended against Floyd Mayweather, who dominated him from the opening bell and stopped him in eight rounds. Hernandez retired afterward with a career record of 38-2-1 (17).

Hernandez counts punches these days for CompuBox. He's not affiliated with Golden Boy Promotions or Mayweather's people in any way, and having come up on the West Coast around the same time as De La Hoya, he knows his history. He's recalled universally as a classy, smart technician in the ring. He knew how to use his head in there. In other words, he's the perfect guy to talk to about the Mayweather-De La Hoya fight, which, in case you've been sleeping under a rock somewhere, is scheduled for May 5 in Las Vegas.

It goes without saying that Mayweather-De La Hoya will be a huge event and, because of the way the game is structured these days, the richest in history. But it wouldn't be so if De La Hoya hadn't looked spectacular dismantling Ricardo Mayorga in May 2006. Consider that in his previous three fights—a kayo loss to Bernard Hopkins, a close win over Felix Sturm, and a disputed points loss to Shane Mosley—"The Golden Boy" was something less than scintillating.

Indeed, after the loss to Hopkins (expected as it was), many were writing and saying that his prime was well over, and that if De La Hoya fought again at all, he'd have a hard time winning a major fight. Then along came Mayorga, whose selection was something just shy of brilliant. He made De La Hoya look

25 years old. Hernandez doesn't expect to see the same De La Hoya against Mayweather.

"Floyd Mayweather is a lot faster than De La Hoya is and Oscar is going to find it difficult to hit him with a solid shot," Hernandez said. "Oscar has trouble with guys who are as fast as he is or faster. A lot of people think Oscar looked good against Mayorga, but he was in there with a streetfighter who throws wide, looping punches. Of course Oscar was going to look good against him. If he thinks he's going to look as good against Mayweather, he should think again."

Hernandez is right, of course, about Mayorga. Mayweather is about as far away from the Nicaraguan, technically, athletically, as any fighter can be. We'd be hard-pressed to name a single fighter who is as sound, fundamentally, as is Mayweather. He is also smaller, however, a fact many observers point to when leaning toward a victory for De La Hoya.

After all, De La Hoya first fought at 154 pounds in June '01, when he decisioned Javier Castillejo for the WBC belt. It's seen today as his natural weight (it having been established, emphatically, that he's no middleweight). Mayweather, on the other hand, has never fought at 154. As recently as two years ago he was a junior welterweight, and has had only two fights at 147. If the axiom that says a good big man will beat a good little man is true, De La Hoya should win. Hernandez doesn't think so.

"I don't believe that Oscar being supposedly bigger than Floyd, because he's been fighting at that weight longer, will make any difference," he said. "Floyd spars with light heavyweights in the gym and they can't hit him. You can't hurt what you can't hit, and if Oscar can't hit Floyd, he can't hurt him." Hernandez says, too, that many people don't understand that when a fighter moves up in weight, his body adjusts to taking punishment from bigger, stronger fighters, so if he trains right—against the right guys—size shouldn't matter.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mayweather has never fought at 154 pounds, while De La Hoya fought six times at the weight, including his July 2001 decision over Javier Castillejo. How much his junior middleweight experience will help him against Mayweather remains to be seen.

It should also be noted that despite the apparent weight disparity that exists now, De La Hoya and Mayweather started at around the same weight and achieved their first real professional success within five pounds of one another. De La Hoya's first alphabet strap was the IBF ver-

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Hernandez notes that De La Hoya is vulnerable to bodyshots and advises "Pretty Boy" to go downstairs, as he does against Jose Luis Castillo. It sounds like good counsel, especially considering that Bernard Hopkins kayoed Oscar with a single left hook to the body when they fought as middleweights in 2004.

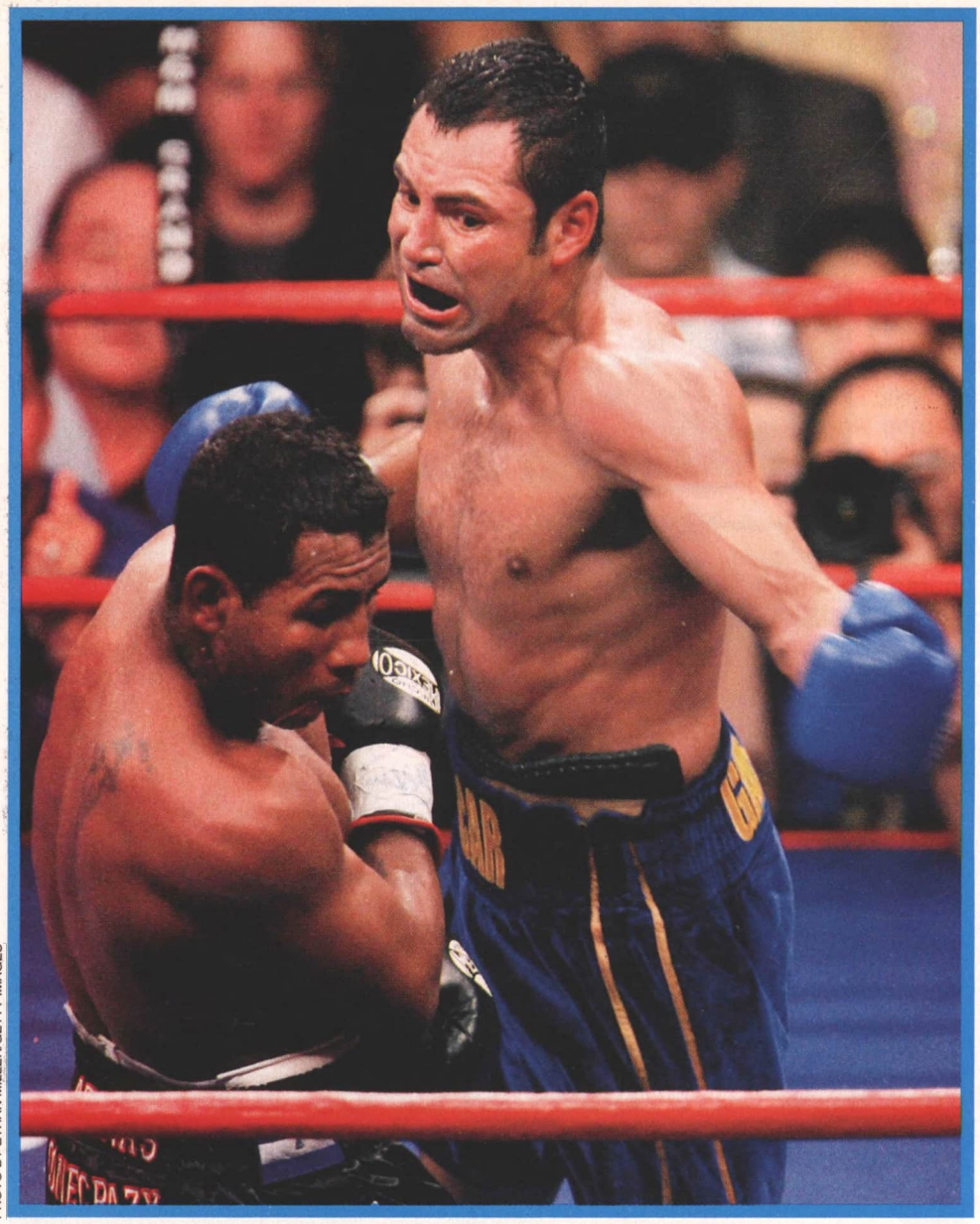


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The great equalizer could be De La Hoya's left hook, but he is going to find Mayweather a far more elusive target than Ricardo Mayorga, who was knocked out by The Golden Boy in May 2006.

sion he won at 135 with his win in '95 over Rafael Ruelas. Mayweather's was the junior lightweight belt he won by beating Hernandez. That's just five pounds.

Still, one would expect De La Hoya to be the harder hitter, something with which Hernandez has direct experience.

"My brother [trainer Rudy Hernandez] told me I got stung with a right by Mayweather, but I *know* I got stunned with an uppercut by Oscar." Still, he doesn't see power as a major in factor in the fight. "I don't see either of them as big punchers. They're both very quick and throw good combinations, and that's where the damage comes from."

Hernandez also thinks that Mayweather's strategy should include some bodypunching. "I know, no fighter likes getting hit in the body," he said, "but Oscar is weak down there. I've known him for so many years. I remember years ago when he was an amateur, he was sparring once with Julio Cesar Chavez. Chavez hit him hard to the body and really hurt Oscar. They had to stop the sparring. He hurt him bad. The Olympic Committee said they were going to sue Chavez because professionals aren't supposed to spar with amateurs, but they do."

Chavez wasn't the only guy to hurt De La Hoya to the body. Mosley's thudding rights downstairs paved the way for both of his victories over De La Hoya and, of course, Hopkins stopped him with a left downstairs in their middleweight title bout. Some observers maintain that it wasn't the bodyblow from Hopkins that sent De La Hoya writing on the canvas in the ninth round, but the pressure Hopkins was applying. Hernandez is among them.

"Against Bernard Hopkins, I don't think Oscar got hit hard. I think he felt like he was getting tired or hurt and wanted it to be done. When a fighter gets hurt to the body, he doesn't cry on the canvas and all that like Oscar did. If Floyd is beating Oscar easily and makes him look bad, he should hit him in the body if he can. That will be Oscar's excuse to go down and say, 'I got hit in the body, I couldn't get up, I couldn't beat the count.'"

De La Hoya's new trainer, Freddie Roach, probably won't be able to do anything about his new star's distaste for bodypunches, but, then, neither could Papa Mayweather. Hernandez sees their parting, which came about allegedly because De La Hoya wouldn't meet Mayweather's demand for a $2-million cut, as a good thing for everyone involved.

"I don't think keeping Mayweather Sr. as his trainer would have been a very good idea. I mean, Floyd would be working with a guy who was trying to knock his son's head off. Subconsciously or consciously, he could be working against Oscar. Money does affect everyone's point of view, but I think in the end that Floyd Sr.

has too much respect for his son to train Oscar to beat him. Plus, I don't see how any good publicity could have come out of it. Also, Oscar has always changed trainers a lot and he's always said, 'I'm in the best shape of my life.' I think he picks something up from every trainer he's with and puts it all together and it works out well for him."

Hernandez likes Mayweather's speed, but doesn't discount De La Hoya entirely, if he fights the right fight. "Oscar has to try to time Floyd when Floyd jumps in with that right hand. Oscar has to throw his left hook as soon as he sees Floyd throw the right hand. But it'll be hard because Floyd is so quick."

De La Hoya as a counterpuncher flies in the face of conventional thought that says in order to beat a classical stand-up boxer-mover like Mayweather, you have to rough him up on the inside. Jose Luis Castillo twice had more success than anybody has had against Mayweather and he did it just that way: by getting close to him, going to his body, and trapping him on the ropes or in corners. And he threw a lot of punches. But De La Hoya has never really been that kind of fighter. Hernandez says he doesn't have to be.

"Floyd Mayweather is a hell of a counterpuncher. If you watch him work on the pads with his trainer, you see that he's working on counterpunching. And all of his sparring partners rush him. Everybody who fights him says, 'He's a boxer; I have to go to him, get close, throw a lot of punches. I have to go after him.' They see he's got quick hands and can box and they figure they have to pressure him. So they all go right to him and he looks great.

"If I were going to fight him again, I'd be the counterpuncher. I'd make him come to me. That's what Oscar should do. The people would hate it because it would be a boring fight, but that's the way to beat him. If Oscar made Floyd come to him, and Floyd tried to make Oscar lead, sooner or later one of them would make a mistake."

It's an excellent point. Both are counterpunchers by nature (De La Hoya was less so when he was younger and lighter and could overpower smaller guys) and clearly better when being pursued. But would De La Hoya's ego let him sit back against a naturally smaller fighter who is coming up to his division? And will Mayweather be able to hold back against the man his estranged father trained for the last several fights, and considered training to beat his own son? The very laws of nature would dictate that De La Hoya pursues, while Mayweather retreats strategically and sets traps. But if the laws of nature are reversed (think Sugar Ray Leonard-Tommy Hearns I), who knows what could happen?

Hernandez knows whom he likes, and doesn't hesitate: "Mayweather by decision."

The guy is no politician. ■

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

If looks could kill, Mayweather would have keeled over dead at the Big Apples press conference. But nothing came of this tension filled moment, as both men were smart enough to save themselves for the real thing.

MAYWEATHER VS. DE LA HOYA

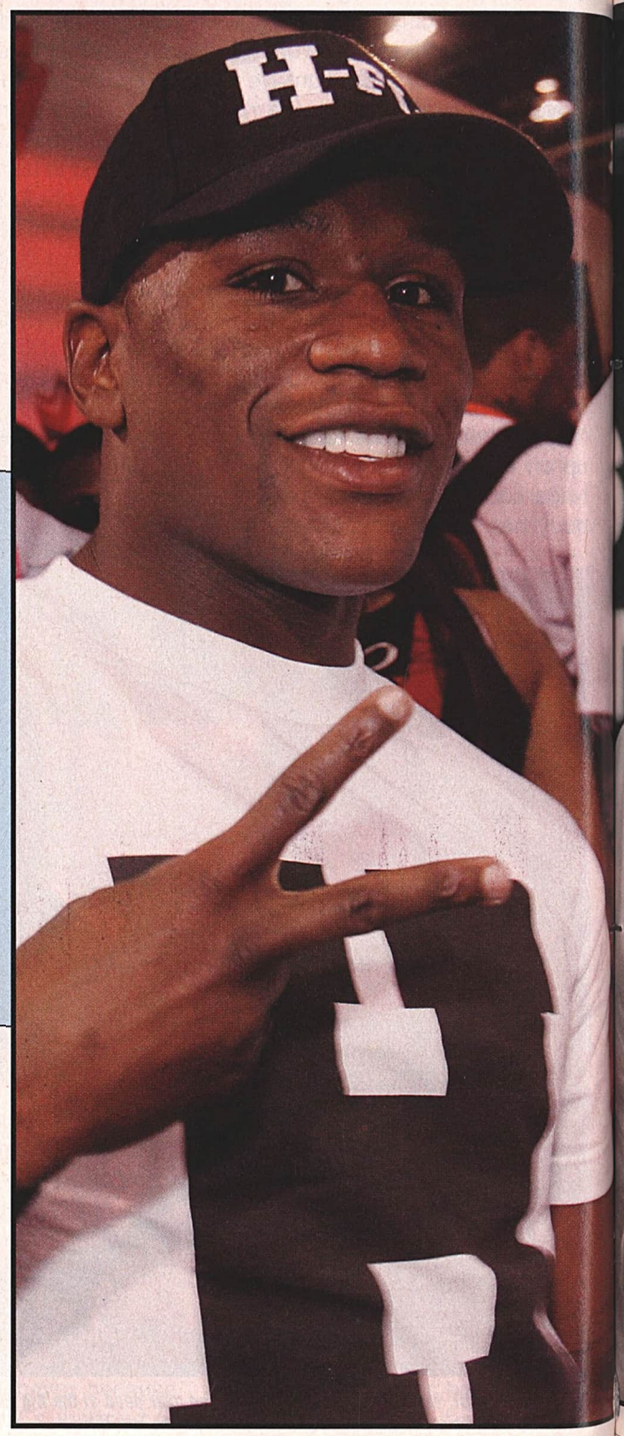
20 EXPERTS TELL YOU WHO WILL WIN & WHY

Compiled By Robert Mladinich

The biggest fight of the new millennium will take place on May 5 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and will be televised by HBO Pay-Per-View. It pits welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather, 37-0 (24), who is generally regarded as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, against WBC super lightweight titleholder Oscar De La Hoya, 38-4 (30), who is the sport's biggest attraction. They will clash at 154 pounds in one of those fights where almost any outcome is within the bounds of reason.

The boxing world is wondering if Mayweather will knock off the naturally bigger De La Hoya and emerge as the fighter of this generation, or if "The Golden Boy" can still outshine even the toughest opposition.

To better gauge what industry insiders are thinking, THE RING has polled 20 experts who have offered the following array of insights and predictions about this highly anticipated battle.



PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Shelley Finkel (manager): "I don't have any firm conviction, but I'm leaning toward Oscar to win. Since Floyd has moved up in weight, he hasn't been able to hurt anyone. Oscar is the biggest guy he's ever fought. He's also a lot faster than what Floyd is used to. Oscar has got to be aggressive and not allow Floyd to move in and out. This comes down to a great big guy versus a great little guy. Look at Bernard Hopkins against Oscar. A similar thing could happen here, but I expect Oscar to win a decision."

Tim Smith (New York *Daily News*): "This is a fairly close fight because both fighters are so talented. De La Hoya has to use his greater power to catch up to and slow down Floyd. I don't think that Floyd can knock out Oscar, and if Oscar can get to him, he can do damage. But I feel that Mayweather is this generation's Sugar Ray Robinson or at least as close as anyone can get to that level, so I like Mayweather by decision."

Teddy Atlas (trainer and ESPN analyst): "This fight can't be business as usual for De La Hoya. It entails him understanding exactly what Mayweather's strengths are and working to negate them. People say that De La Hoya is the bigger, longer, and taller fighter, but both guys started out as junior lightweights. De La Hoya has to keep Mayweather off-stride and not let him get in and out. Zab Judah gave Mayweather trouble for four or five rounds, but didn't have the ability or the substance to keep it up. This fight might be coming five years too late for De La Hoya, but I think he has enough experience and substance for me to make a solid case for him. I would make Mayweather the favorite, but I love live underdogs and De La Hoya is a very live underdog."

Tim Graham (*Buffalo News* and president of the Boxing Writers Association of America): "I refuse to say the petulant Mayweather will outclass De La Hoya, but unless Mayweather's hand breaks, he'll be the better man in the ring. De La Hoya hasn't beaten an elite-level fighter in years. He looked shaky in beating Felix Sturm, while Mayweather has never been anything but dominant. Mayweather will be too slick for De La Hoya. De La Hoya is skilled enough to go the distance, but I see the referee stepping in late to stop Oscar from getting picked apart. Mayweather by TKO."

Pat Lynch (manager of Arturo Gatti, who fought both De La Hoya and Mayweather): "Oscar is the bigger guy, but Mayweather won't take any chances and will fight very smart. If Mayweather stays within a good game plan, which I think he will do, he will do what he does best: frustrate the other guy. I really love Oscar for never ducking anyone, but I don't think the size factor that everyone is talking about will make a big difference. Mayweather looks very comfortable and strong at welterweight. It was a natural maturation process for him. He hasn't lost any of his speed along the way. I like Mayweather by decision."

Tim Dahlberg (Associated Press): "If De La Hoya can land one of his left hooks, the fight could be competitive. But I think that De La Hoya deluded himself after the Ricardo Mayorga fight into thinking that victory prepared him for a big fight like this one. The whole question is whether or not Oscar can land his left hook. Mayweather is much too quick for Oscar. There's always a chance that Mayweather's going up in weight might factor in, but I don't think it will. Both guys started off at 130 and kept moving up. That neutralizes the size issue. Mayweather by decision."

Hector Roca (trainer): "De La Hoya is too big and too strong for Mayweather. He probably walks around at 160, 165 pounds. Plus, he has so much more experience in big, competitive fights. People think that Mayweather can't be hit, but Zab Judah hit him plenty. The fight will be competitive for a while, but after four or five rounds De La Hoya will be in command. He is something special, and he will win a decision."

Steve Farhood (*ShoBox* commentator): "This is the career defining fight for Mayweather, so he'll be hungrier and more focused than ever. On top of that, he's been the more active fighter. Oscar is going to find out that he can't turn his talent on and off at will. The only advantage for De La Hoya is his size, but this fight figures to be a boxing match, so that advantage shouldn't surface. I pick Mayweather to win on points in a fast-paced but careful boxing match."

Joey Gamache (former WBA super featherweight and lightweight titleholder): "I don't think that De La Hoya is finished yet. He will be able to use his advantage in size and his versatility to beat Mayweather. Mayweather is a fully loaded welterweight, but De La Hoya is a big, strong guy with a lot of ring intelligence. I can't see Mayweather hurting him. He's a decent puncher, but not a good enough puncher to slow De La Hoya down. De La Hoya is smart enough to find weaknesses in Mayweather and take advantage of them. De La Hoya will find a way to win by decision."

Dan Rafael (ESPN.com senior writer): "Speed kills, so I have to lean toward Mayweather. He is younger, faster, and hungrier. People are making Oscar out to be this much bigger guy, but both guys fought their whole careers in the same weight divisions. I don't think that size is a real issue. If Oscar can't hit Floyd, none of that will matter anyway. Mayweather by decision."

Carlos Baldomir (former welterweight champion who lost the title to Mayweather): "Why not just ask me to give you the winning Argentina lottery numbers? That would be just as hard as picking the winner of this fight. I found out personally what fantastic foot and hand speed Mayweather has. You have to be in the ring with him to really appreciate his skills. He is a once-in-a-generation type fighter, but so is De La Hoya. Oscar is also the bigger, stronger man. I think it will be a competitive fight with a lot of twists and turns. I can see either guy winning, but am leaning toward Oscar by decision due to his size and strength. I know they say that speed kills, but Oscar has an excellent record for choosing the right opponent at the right time. He is very smart in and out of the ring."

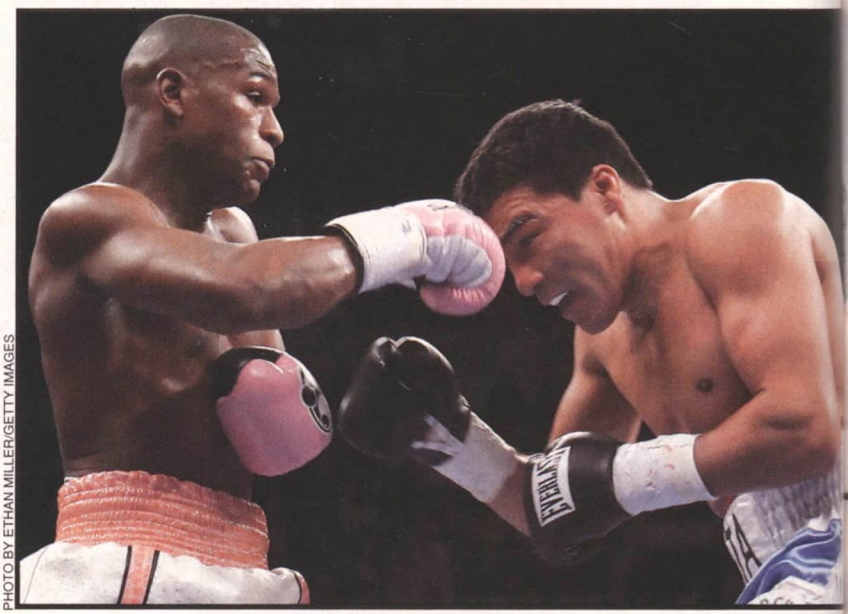


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Baldomir, who lost the welterweight title to Mayweather in November 2006, thinks that De La Hoya's size and strength will be too much for "Pretty Boy" to handle.

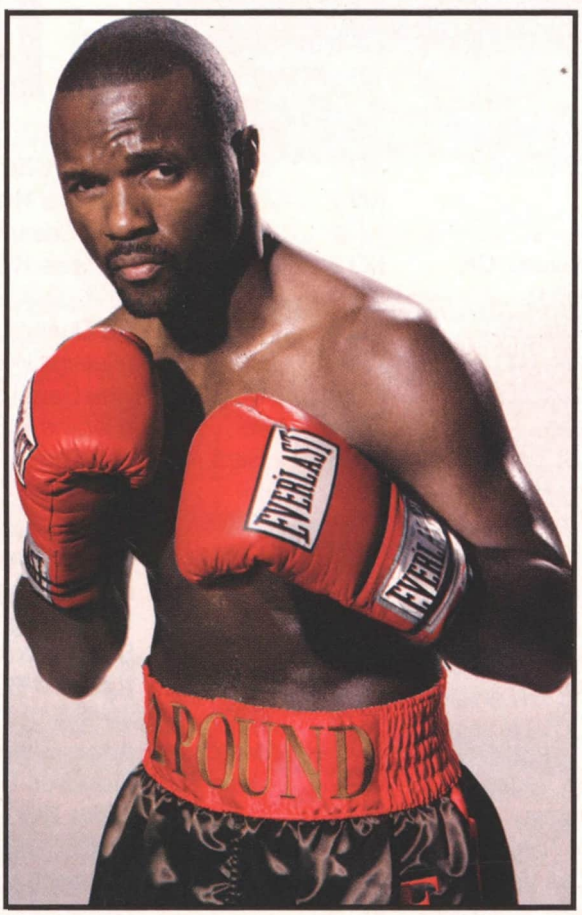
Grady Brewer (winner of season two of *The Contender*): "Mayweather should come out with a big win. He's too slick, fast on his feet, and has much better upper body movement. I give De La Hoya a lot of credit, but I don't see how he can win. He will do what he has to do to try to win, but it won't be enough. Mayweather will be in and out all night. This will frustrate De La Hoya. Mayweather is capable of stopping De La Hoya, but I think he will win a decision."

Bruce Silverglade (Gleason's Gym owner): "This is a very easy fight for Mayweather. De La Hoya is past his prime and Mayweather is at the top of his game. The weight won't matter; it's the age factor that is more important. De La Hoya is not the De La Hoya of five, six, or seven years ago. Mayweather is the new kid on the block. He's now the type of fighter that De La Hoya was five, six, or seven years ago. In a one-sided fight, Mayweather will win a decision."

Nick Charles (*ShoBox* commentator): "I have immense respect for Oscar, but Floyd always puts his opponents in fights they can't win. Oscar, of course, is always dangerous and he never ducks anyone, but Floyd has matured into a natural welterweight. He looks really strong at that weight, so I don't think it will hurt him. Floyd should be able to dictate the range and the pace of the fight and win a clear-cut decision."

Mark Breland (Olympic gold medalist and former WBA welterweight titleholder): "De La Hoya is the bigger puncher, but I have to go with Floyd because of his craftiness and smartness. Plus, his defense is spectacular. When De La Hoya tries to be defensive, it usually doesn't work for him. He's a much better offensive fighter, but Floyd will make him fight defensively. I don't think the weight will affect Floyd because he probably walks around at 160 pounds. Mayweather by decision."

Steve Forbes (former IBF junior lightweight titleholder): "This is a very difficult fight for both guys. I sparred quite a bit with Floyd in the early days of his career, so I can tell you how good he is. In the gym now, he always spars with bigger and stronger guys, so I don't think the size difference will matter. I think this fight will start off real good, with lots of back and forth momentum. Floyd should take over by the seventh or eighth round and win a decision."



Steve Forbes, who used to spar with Mayweather, believes that Floyd will utilize in-and-out motion to box his way to a decision victory.

Paul Williams (welterweight contender): "Good little men don't usually beat good big men, but anything can happen in this fight. I can see either guy winning. If Floyd uses his speed and quickness, he wins easily. If he stands and trades with De La Hoya, he gets beat. One part of me sees Floyd running and boxing to a decision. But if I had to bet, I'd go with De La Hoya. He knows how to get the most out of his talent. De La Hoya by decision.

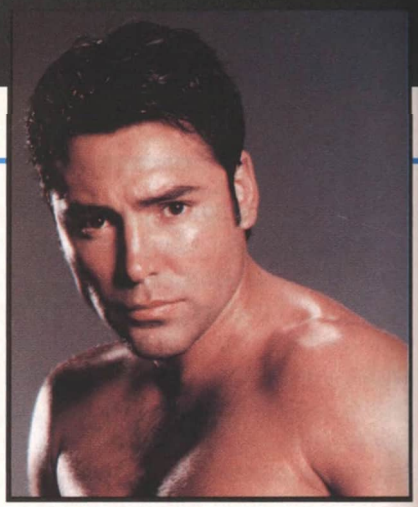
Buddy McGirt (former IBF junior welterweight and WBC welterweight titleholder and current trainer): "This is a tough pick. People say Oscar is old, but he's in better shape than he gets credit for. Both of these guys are great fighters who can rumble. Both have been in big fights, so they have big fight experience. Floyd looks pretty unbeatable, but if anyone can beat him it's Oscar. It's a hard pick, but since you're forcing me, I guess I lean toward Oscar by decision."

Eddie McLoughlin (promoter of middleweight John Duddy): "This is a pick 'em fight, but I have to go with De La Hoya. Mayweather will probably pick his shots and win the first few rounds, but De La Hoya will be able to use his size and strength to walk him down and win a nip-and-tuck battle by about two or three rounds."

Iran Barkley (former WBC middleweight, IBF super middleweight, and WBA light heavyweight titleholder): "Oscar doesn't fare too well against pressure, so Floyd will have to put a lot of pressure on him to win. Even Oscar's advantage in height and reach won't be enough to keep Floyd away. Even though Floyd is moving up in weight, I think he's just getting stronger. With his speed and what little power he has, he'll outbox De La Hoya and win a decision."

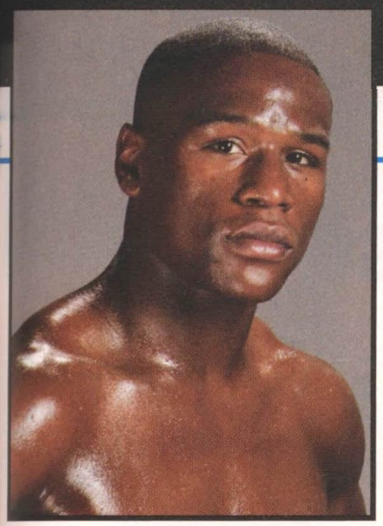
Final Tally: Mayweather 12; De La Hoya 8 ■

OSCAR DE LA HOYA



RECORD: 38-4 (30)				
FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
42	38	4	0	30

1992		
Nov. 23	Lamar Williams, Inglewood, CA	KO 1
Dec. 12	Cliff Hicks, Phoenix	KO 1
1993		
Jan. 3	Paris Alexander, Hollywood, CA	KO 2
Feb. 6	Curtis Strong, San Diego	KO 4
March 13	Jeff Mayweather, Las Vegas	KO 4
April 6	Mike Grable, Rochester, NY	W 8
May 8	Frankie Avelar, Stateline, NV	KO 4
June 7	Troy Dorsey, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 14	Renaldo Carter, Bay St. Louis, MS	KO 6
Aug. 27	Angelo Nunez, Beverly Hills, CA	KO 4
Oct. 30	Narciso Valenzuela, Phoenix	KO 1
1994		
March 5	Jimmi Bredahl, Los Angeles	KO 10
May 27	Giorgio Campanella, Las Vegas	KO 3
July 29	Jorge Paez, Las Vegas	KO 2
Nov. 18	Carl Griffith, Las Vegas	KO 3
Dec. 10	John Avila, Los Angeles	KO 9
1995		
Feb. 18	John-John Molina, Las Vegas	W 12
May 6	Rafael Ruelas, Las Vegas *(Wins IBF Lightweight Title)*	KO 2
Sept. 9	Genaro Hernandez, Las Vegas	KO 6
Dec. 15	Jesse James Leija, New York City	KO 2
1996		
Feb. 9	Darryl Tyson, Las Vegas	KO 2
June 7	Julio Cesar Chavez, Las Vegas *(Wins WBC Super Lightweight Title)*	KO 4
1997		
Jan. 18	Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Super Lightweight Title)*	W 12
April 12	Pernell Whitaker, Las Vegas *(Wins WBC Welterweight Title)*	W 12
June 14	David Kamau, San Antonio *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	KO 2
Sept. 13	Hector Camacho, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	W 12
Dec. 6	Wilfredo Rivera, Atlantic City *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	KO 8
1998		
June 13	Patrick Charpentier, El Paso, TX *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	KO 3
Sept. 18	Julio Cesar Chavez, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	KO 8
1999		
Feb. 13	Ike Quartey, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	W 12
May 22	Oba Carr, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Welterweight Title)*	KO 11
Sept. 18	Felix Trinidad, Las Vegas *(Loses WBC Welterweight Title)*	L 12
2000		
Feb. 26	Derrell Coley, New York City *(Subsequently Awarded Vacant WBC Welterweight Title)*	KO 7
June 17	Shane Mosley, Los Angeles *(Loses WBC Welterweight Title)*	L 12
2001		
March 24	Arturo Gatti, Las Vegas	KO 5
June 23	Francisco Castillejo, Las Vegas *(Wins WBC Super Welterweight Title)*	W 12
2002		
Sept. 14	Fernando Vargas, Las Vegas *(Wins Vacant World Junior Middleweight Title; Retains WBC Title; Wins WBA Title)*	KO 11
2003		
May 3	Yory Boy Campas, Las Vegas *(Retains World Junior Middleweight Title; Retains WBC Title; Retains WBA Title)*	KO 7
Sept. 13	Shane Mosley, Las Vegas *(Loses World Junior Middleweight Title; Loses WBC Title; Loses WBA Title)*	L 12
2004		
June 5	Felix Sturm, Las Vegas	W 12
Sept. 18	Bernard Hopkins, Las Vegas *(For World Middleweight Title)*	KO by 9
2006		
May 6	Ricardo Mayorga, Las Vegas *(Wins WBC Light Middleweight Title)*	KO 6



FLOYD MAYWEATHER

RECORD: 37-0 (24)				
FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
37	37	0	0	24

1996		
Oct. 11	Robert Apodaca, Las Vegas	KO 2
Nov. 30	Reggie Sanders, Albuquerque, NM	W 4
1997		
Jan. 18	Jerry Cooper, Las Vegas	KO 1
Jan. 31	Edgar Ayala, Chula Vista, CA	KO 2
March 12	Kino Rodriguez, Grand Rapids, MI	KO 1
April 12	Bobby Geipert, Las Vegas	KO 1
May 9	Tony Duran, Las Vegas	KO 1
June 14	Larry O'Shields, San Antonio, TX	W 6
July 12	Jesus Chavez, Biloxi, MS	KO 4
Sept. 6	Luis Leija, El Paso, TX	KO 2
Oct. 14	Felipe Garcia, Boise, ID	KO 6
Nov. 20	Angelo Nunez, Los Angeles, CA	KO 3
1998		
Jan. 9	Hector Arroyo, Biloxi	KO 5
Feb. 28	Sam Girard, Atlantic City, NJ	KO 2
March 23	Miguel Melo, Ledyard, CT	KO 3
April 17	Gustavo Cuello, Los Angeles	W 10
June 14	Tony Pep, Atlantic City	W 10
Oct. 3	Genaro Hernandez, Las Vegas *(Wins WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	KO 8
Dec. 19	Angel Manfredy, Miami *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	KO 2
1999		
Feb. 17	Carlos Rios, Grand Rapids *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	W 12
May 22	Justin Juuko, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	KO 9
Sept. 11	Carlos Gerena, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	KO 7
2000		
March 18	Goyo Vargas, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	W 12
Oct. 21	Emanuel Burton, Detroit *(Non-Title Bout)*	KO 9
2001		
Jan. 20	Diego Corrales, Las Vegas *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	KO 10
May 26	Carlos Hernandez, Grand Rapids *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	W 12
Nov. 10	Jesus Chavez, San Francisco *(Retains WBC Super Featherweight Title)*	KO 9
2002		
April 20	Jose Luis Castillo, Las Vegas *(Wins Vacant World Lightweight Title; Wins WBC Lightweight Title)*	W 12
Dec. 7	Jose Luis Castillo, Las Vegas *(Retains World Lightweight Title; Retains WBC Lightweight Title)*	W 12
2003		
April 19	Victoriano Sosa, Fresno, CA *(Retains World Lightweight Title; Retains WBC Lightweight Title)*	W 12
Nov. 1	Phillip N'dou, Grand Rapids, MI *(Retains World Lightweight Title; Retains WBC Lightweight Title)*	KO 7
2004		
May 22	DeMarcus Corley, Atlantic City, NJ	W 12
2005		
Jan. 22	Henry Bruseles, Miami, FL	KO 8
June 25	Arturo Gatti, Atlantic City *(Wins WBC Junior Welterweight Title)*	KO 6
Nov. 19	Sharmba Mitchell, Portland, OR	KO 6
2006		
April 8	Zab Judah, Las Vegas *(Wins IBF Welterweight Title)*	W 12
Nov. 4	Carlos Manuel Baldomir, Las Vegas *(Wins World Welterweight Title; Wins WBC Welterweight Title)*	W 12

20 CATEGORY COMPARISON

OSCAR DE LA HOYA		FLOYD MAYWEATHER
	Jab	✔
✔	Hook	
	Right Hand	✔
	Uppercut	✔
✔	Bodypunching	
	Infighting	✔
	Combinations	✔
	Defense	✔
	Hand Speed	✔
	Foot Speed	✔
✔	Strength	
	Ring Generalship	✔
	Versatility	✔
✔	Chin	
	Stamina	✔
	Motivation	✔
✔	Finishing Ability	
✔	Heart	
✔	Superfight Experience	
✔	Fan Support	

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

De La Hoya's right hand can't be ignored

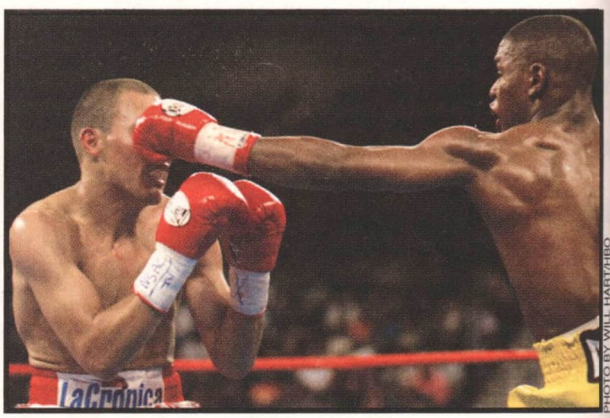


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pretty Boy's jab is fast and accurate

10 GREAT MOMENTS IN JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT HISTORY

The junior middleweight division has come a long way since October 1962, when Emile Griffith outpointed Ted Wright for the newly created junior middleweight title. The concept was the brainchild of the European Boxing Union, but as Griffith still held the far more prestigious world welterweight title, his 15-rounder against fellow American Wright in Vienna, Austria, wasn't taken too seriously by the boxing community in general.

But even back then the Alphabet Boys were already looking for ways to increase their power, and later that same month, Denny Moyer and Joey Giambra squared off in Buffalo, New York, for the WBA version of the 154-pound title. But again, nobody cared very much, and the gate wasn't even big enough to meet the fighters' guarantees.

But times have changed, and on May 5, at the MGM Grand, in Las Vegas, Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather will collide in a mega-fight—with a combined purse of over $30-million at stake! Denny and Joey must be flabbergasted.

The metamorphosis of the junior middleweight division from humble beginnings to a weight class capable of generating such huge sums of money has more to do with the fighters competing than the division itself, which is basically a stopover between the welterweight and middleweight classes. But the upcoming Mayweather-De La Hoya match is not the first junior middleweight fight to create considerable interest. The division has, in the 45 years since Griffith-Wright, become the home—at least, temporarily—to some of the biggest stars the Sweet Science has to offer.

Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns, Wilfred Benitez, and Felix Trinidad have all made headlines and big bucks fighting at 154 pounds. Other name fighters whose profiles weren't quite so high as the aforementioned superstars, but were still headliners in their own right—Simon Brown, Terry Norris, Yory Boy Campas, Vince Pettway, Oscar "Shotgun" Albarado—have also prospered at 154 and provided many unforgettable thrills.

Therefore, in order to set the stage and give some historical perspective to the De La Hoya-Mayweather junior middleweight extravaganza, World Boxing presents 10 of the greatest moments in junior middleweight history.

NINO BENVENUTI KO 6 SANDRO MAZZINGHI

June 18, 1965

The first junior middleweight bout to make a major splash took place in Milan, Italy, between defending titlist Sandro Mazzinghi and Nino Benvenuti. The bout proved that under the right circumstances the 154-pounders could generate tremendous interest, as 40,000 spectators showed up at San Siro Stadium to watch their countrymen fight for the championship of a division that hadn't existed until three years earlier.

Benvenuti was the latest darling of the Italian fans, but Mazzinghi was no chump, and entered the ring for their match with a 41-1 (29) record, including three successful defenses of the title he'd won from Ralph Dupas in '63. But as one wag put it, Benvenuti, who won a gold medal at the '60 Olympics, was the "best thing Italy has come up with since Sophia Loren."

Although he would eventually develop into a bit of a cutie, in those days Benvenuti, 56-0 (23), came forward throwing a steady stream of punches. And despite the fact that Mazzinghi had a few more knockout wins on his ledger, Benevenuti proved a far superior puncher, and the defendi titleholder was sent down in t sixth and counted out at 2:40 of t round.

Following the victory, news Benvenuti's prowess quick crossed the Atlantic, where M dison Square Garden matchmak Teddy Brenner wanted to mat him with Emile Griffith. But th wouldn't happen until '67, aft Benvenuti had lost the 154-pou crown and was campaigning as middleweight. But it was at juni middle that Benvenuti first ma his reputation, and in the proce raised the status of the division.

Benvenuti (left) tops fellow Italian Mazzinghi in front of 40,000 fans

OSCAR ALBARADO KO 15 KOICHI WAJIMA

June 4, 1974

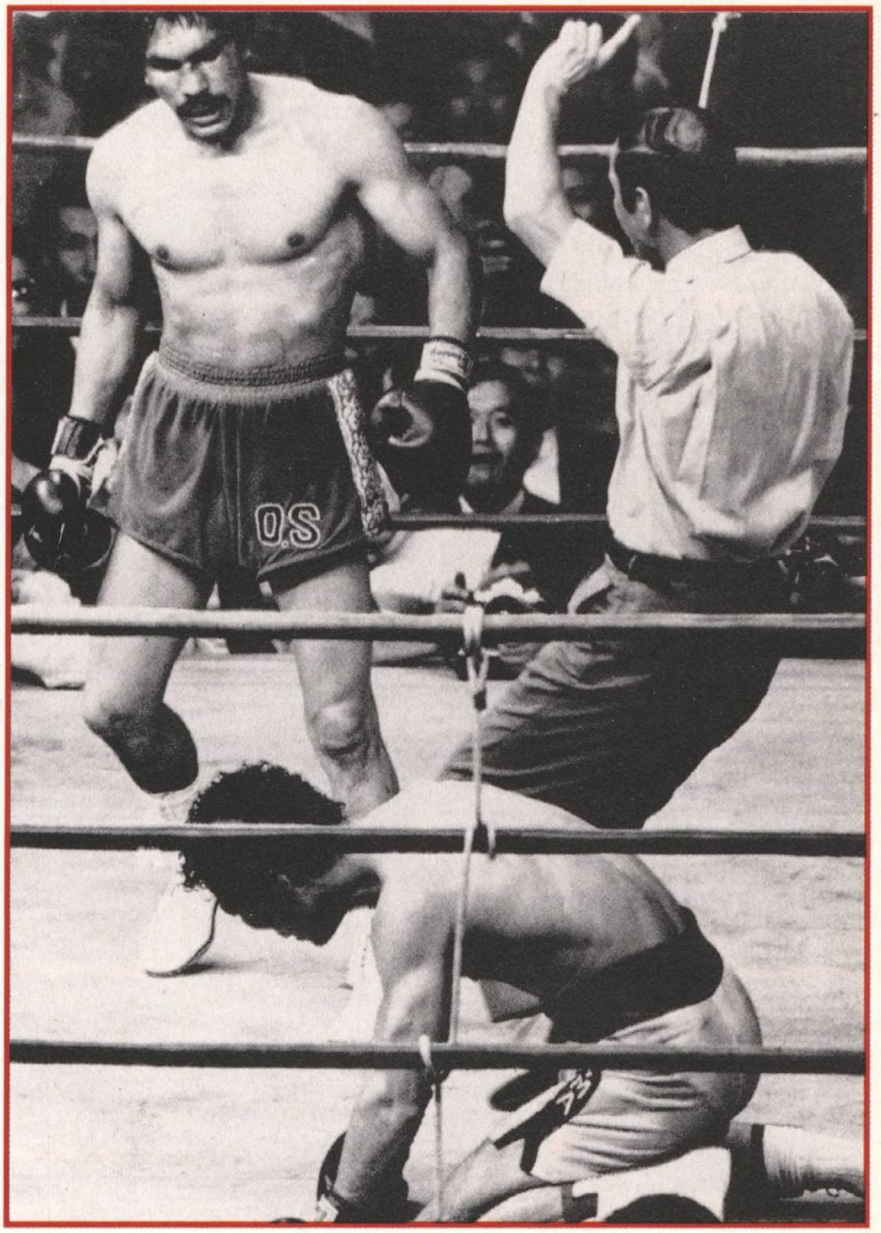
After changing hands on a fairly regular basis, the junior middleweight title was captured by Koichi Wajima, who edged defending beltholder Carmelo Bossi via split decision in October 1971. Wajima brought a measure of stability to the division, making six successful defenses. In a short time, he became Japan's top drawing card, and when he fought Texan Oscar "Shotgun" Albarado, more than 10,000 fans filled the stands at Nihon University Stadium to root for the national hero.

Albarado already had five losses on his record, including a first-round kayo defeat to Dino Del Cid, but was, nonetheless, a battle-hardened warrior who had become a popular attraction in Los Angeles, where he'd tangled with the likes of Armando Muniz, Ernie Lopez, and Hedgemon Lewis.

Wajima, normally a tricky, mobile boxer who favored sudden attacks, abandoned his usual style after losing the first three rounds, and took the fight to his challenger. This played right into Albarado's hands, but also resulted in a highly entertaining slugfest.

In rounds seven, eight, nine, and 10, Albarado and Wajima stood toe-to-toe and traded bombs. Gradually, Albarado's left uppercut to the body sapped the Japanese boxer's stamina, and he began to fade. But a number of Albarado's blows strayed below the belt, and in the 11th, referee Yusaku Yoshida deducted a point from the challenger.

Wajima, 29-2-1 (24), rallied in the 14th, pinning Albarado to the ropes and firing away with a non-stop barrage in a desperate bid to retain the title, and if he could have won the final round, the belt would have stayed in Japan. But Wajima exhausted himself with his all-out attack, and Albarado, 49-6-1 (37), scored three knockdowns in the 15th round to annex the title. Their shootout was further proof that the 154-pounders could provide the kind of bristling action fans would support.



Albarado topples Wajima in final round of slugfest

ROBERTO DURAN KO 8 DAVEY MOORE

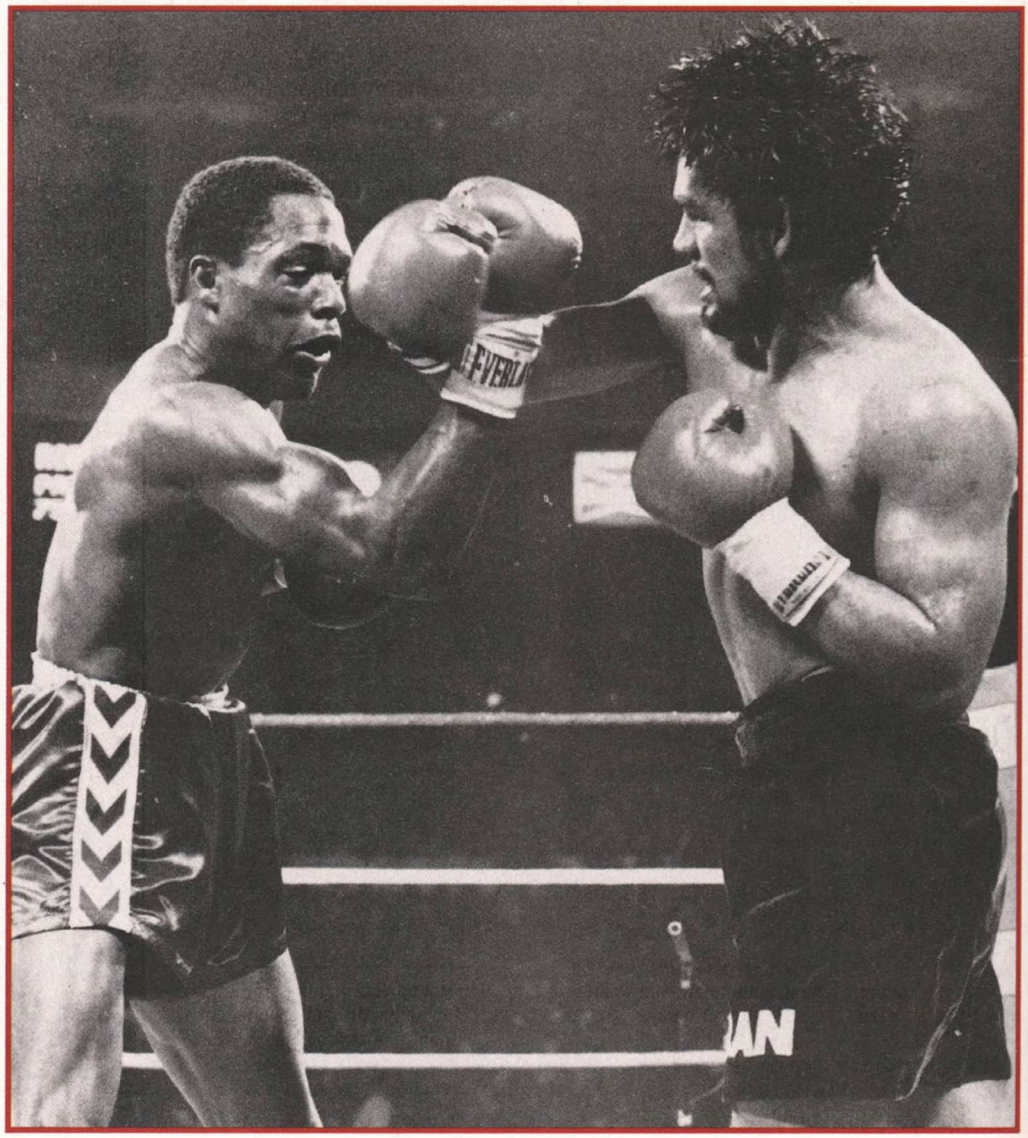
June 16, 1983

By the summer of '83, Roberto Duran appeared washed-up. Losing to Ray Leonard in their infamous "No Mas" fight was bad enough, but subsequent losses to Wilfred Benitez and Kirkland Laing seemed to have pretty much finished him as a world-class fighter. Still, "Manos De Piedra" had a lot of fans, and when he was matched with WBA junior middleweight titlist Davey Moore, 20,061 spectators jammed into Madison Square Garden to see what many figured would be the Panamanian's last shot at a title.

But what most had thought would be a requiem for an aging hero turned out to be a resurrection. Fighting with a passion he hadn't shown since the first Leonard fight, the 32-year-old Duran took Moore, a 5-2 favorite, apart with an assault so brutal, the 24-year-old New Yorker was never the same fighter again.

An errant (maybe) thumb began to swell Moore's right eye in the first, and when Duran, 78-4 (55), began to unload to the body, his foe grimaced in pain. Things only got worse for Moore, 12-1 (9), as the fight progressed, and by the seventh round he had been reduced to a punching bag. A straight right to the head floored the badly battered beltholder near the end of the round, but he was saved by the bell.

The fight turned into a horror show in the eighth. Moore had absolutely nothing left, and when he continued to absorb punch after punch, his corner threw a white towel into the ring. But referee Ernesto Magana ignored it and stood frozen, watching the carnage. Thankfully, Jay Edson, a former referee who was working for the promoter, jumped into the ring and provoked Magana to stop the fight. Duran was back—big time!



Duran revives career with brutal kayo of Moore

THOMAS HEARNS KO 2 ROBERTO DURAN

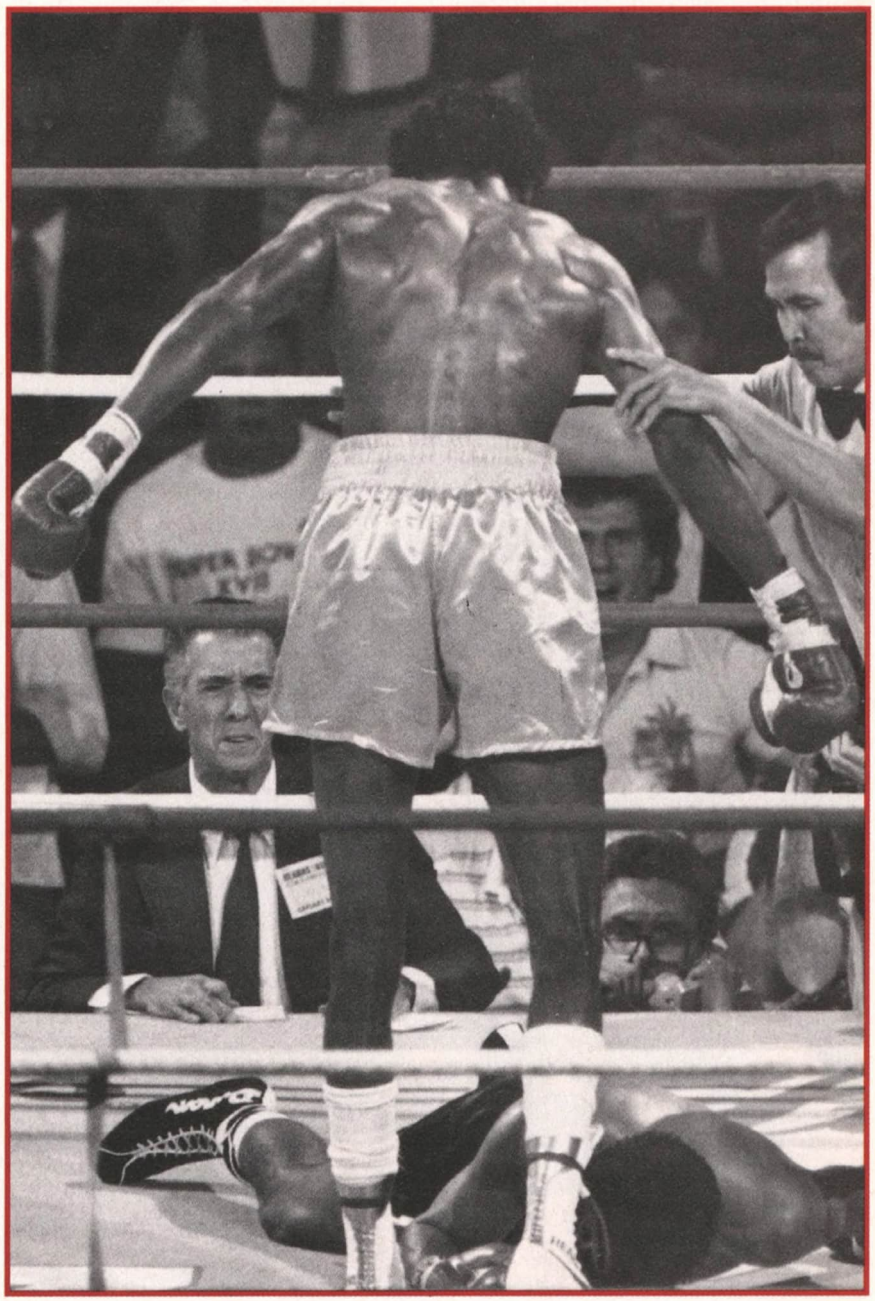
June 15, 1984

Roberto Duran was still riding high from his surprising TKO of Davey Moore the previous year when he clashed with WBC titleholder Thomas Hearns in Las Vegas. Sure, he'd dropped a 15-round decision to middleweight champion Marvin Hagler in his most recent fight, but Duran had given "Marvelous Marv" a good tussle, and the showdown with Hearns was highly anticipated.

Hearns, who had taken his piece of the title away from Wilfred Benitez, had failed to impress in his first defense, when he allowed unheralded Luigi Minchillo to last the distance. "The Hit Man" also wanted a shot at Hagler, and figured that if he could beat Duran more convincingly than Hagler had, it would help facilitate the match. As it turned out, Hearns couldn't have asked for a more impressive victory.

With 14,824 fans on hand at Caesars Palace, Hearns drilled Duran with a beautiful right hand and dropped him in the opening round. He wobbled up in time to beat the count, but Hearns unleashed a volley of powershots, and decked Duran again with a left. The bell prevented Hearns from finishing the job, and when Duran wandered into a neutral corner, it was clear that he wouldn't last much longer.

Hearns opened the second round with a couple of jabs and a left-right combination. Desperate, Duran tried to cling to his opponent's waist, but referee Carlos Padilla separated them, and Hearns, 39-1 (33), opened up with another barrage, punctuated with a crushing right to the jaw that sent Duran, 78-6 (55), down, face-first. Padilla started to count, but when Duran's manager, Luis Spada, jumped into the ring, the ref terminated the count at the 1:07 mark. It remains one of Hearns' most savage victories—and Duran's most devastating defeat.



Duran sleeps at Hearns' feet

ROBERT HINES W 12 MATTHEW HILTON

November 3, 1988

Defending IBF titlist Matthew Hilton knew he'd drained himself sweating down to 154 pounds, but he had a plan: He would bum rush challenger Robert Hines and get rid of him before the effects of his weight loss could catch up with him. And for the first three rounds, the plan worked perfectly.

A two-fisted body attack had the Philadelphian on the retreat in the first, and when Hilton ratcheted up the intensity another notch in the second, Hines went down from a combination. Hines, his face already lumpy from Hilton's blows, was down again in the third after fielding another flurry, but beat the count and bravely made it through the round.

"Sure I was hurt," admitted Hines, "but my stamina pulled me through." Stamina and guts.

From the fourth on, Hines used his superior boxing skills to turn things around. He kept Hilton, 29-1 (23), off-balance with shifty movement and repeatedly slammed his southpaw jab into Hilton's face. As the fight progressed, Hines began to back up the Canadian with stinging combinations, opening cuts on Hilton's left cheekbone and right eye.

A one-point penalty for punching low didn't help Hilton's cause, but he kept trying, and threw everything he had left into a do-or-die counterattack at the start of the 11th round. But the challenger withstood the onslaught, and came back with enough of his own shots to win the round on all three official cards. Hines, 24-1-1 (16), also swept the final round to take the title via unanimous decision in perhaps the greatest comeback in junior middleweight history.

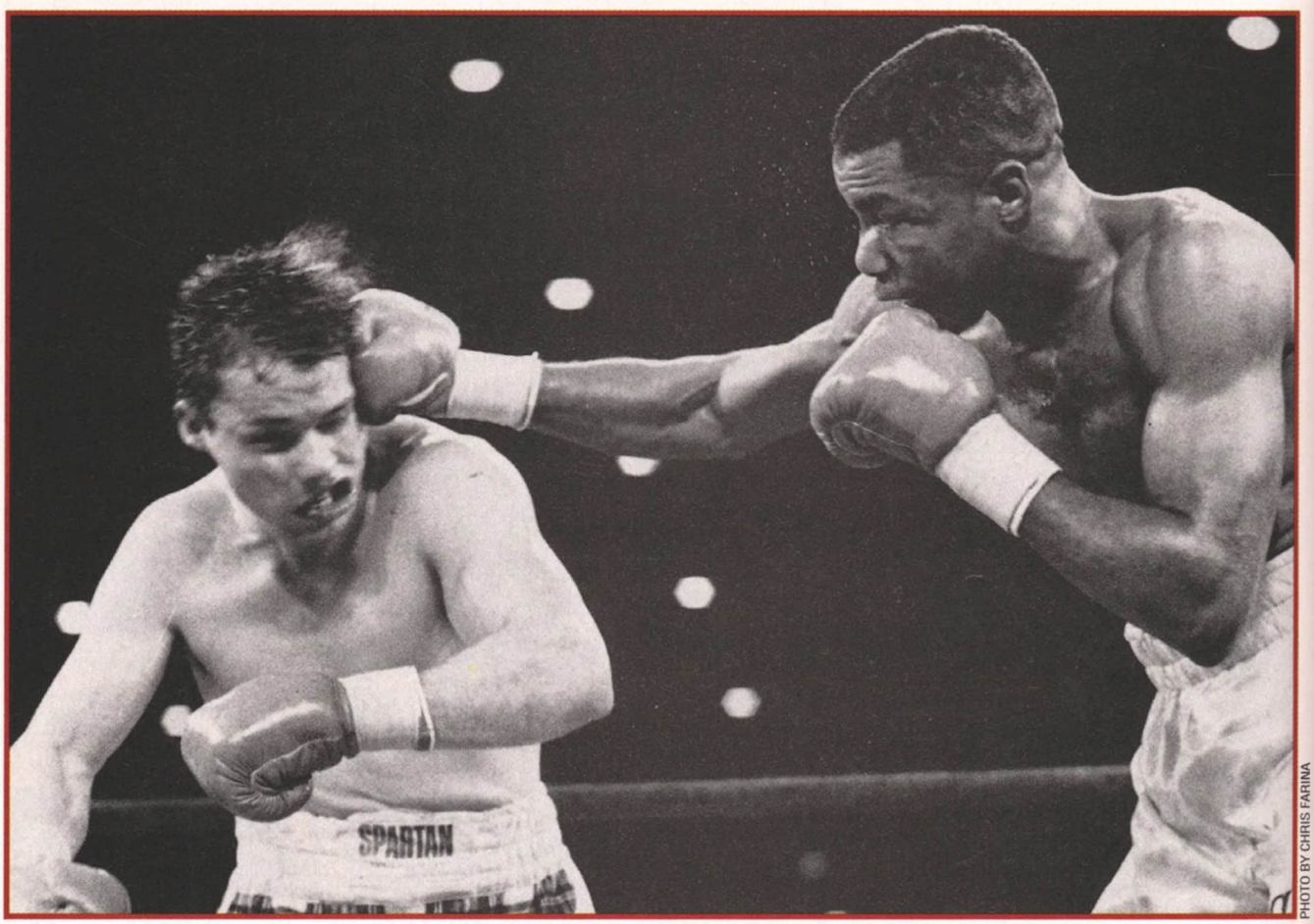


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Hines plasters Hilton with a right in up-from-the-floor comeback

SIMON BROWN KO 4 TERRY NORRIS

December 18, 1993

There have been some noteworthy upsets over the years at junior middle, but none to compare with what happened when Terry Norris put the WBC title on the line against Simon Brown in Puebla, Mexico. This was the 154-pound equivalent of Hasim Rahman-Lennox Lewis I, with the Maryland-based, Adrian Davis-trained Brown coming in supposedly as a no-hope challenger against Norris, a pound-for-pound entrant at the top of his game who was dangerously overconfident. Veteran oddsmaker Herb Lambeck, who would later label Rahman a 20-1 underdog, called Brown a 30-1 longshot.

Yet Brown, a 30-year-old former welterweight titleholder who was thought to be almost completely washed-up, dominated "Terrible Terry" for as long as the bout lasted. Norris, 36-4 (22), could have easily outboxed Brown, 40-2 (31), but he chose to gun for the knockout instead. When you have Norris' weak whiskers, that's never a good idea, and Brown exposed just what a horrible mistake it was when he dropped the defending titlist with a jab, of all punches, late in the first round. A chopping right wobbled Norris in the second, and the heavy favorite was so badly dazed by the end of the third, his cornermen had to help him back to his stool. The incredible upset was completed early in the fourth when, out of a southpaw stance, Brown landed a right hand that sent Terrible Terry down for the count.

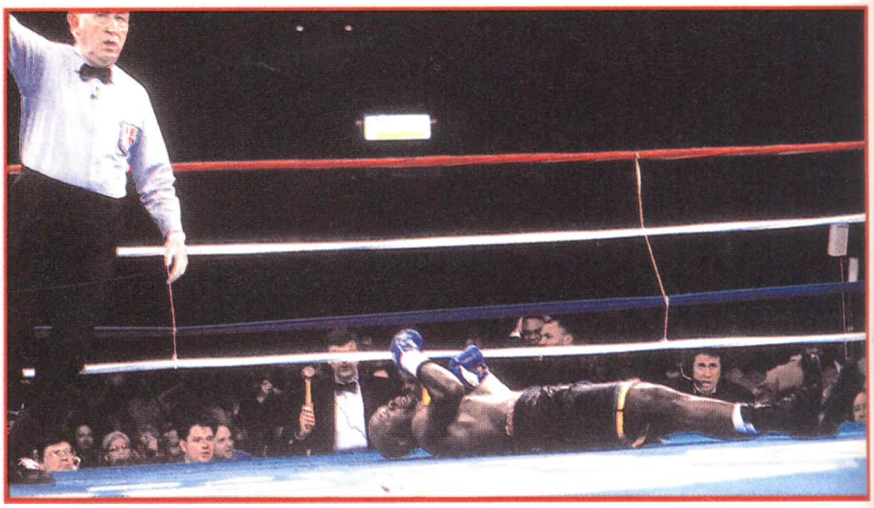
It wasn't the greatest fight in junior middleweight history—it was far too one-sided for such recognition—but Brown-Norris was certainly the most shocking result in the division's first 40 years.

Brown celebrates (above) after shocking kayo of Norris (left)

PHOTOS BY TERRY BLACKBURN

VINCENT PETTWAY KO 6 SIMON BROWN

April 29, 1995



Even without the eerie, unsettling, yet magnificent finish, the Landover, Maryland, war between local rivals Vincent Pettway and Simon Brown would have made this list. It was a sensational brawl, featuring four knockdowns, several swings of the pendulum, and a dab of dirty fighting. But all that happened in the first five rounds was ultimately overshadowed by what went down in the sixth, when defending IBF beltholder Pettway delivered what surely ranks near the top of the list of the 154-pound division's most memorable knockouts.

Late in the first round, former welter and junior middle titlist Brown landed a left hook on the point of Pettway's suspect chin, sending him down but not out. Pettway got up and danced his way through the second round, before striking back with a straight right that drove Brown to the floor in the third. Brown came back aggressively in the fourth, though, and he dropped Pettway in the fifth, following up a low blow that the referee missed with a right-left-right combination that sent Pettway partway through the ropes. When Pettway rose, the rule-bending escalated, with the defending titleholder throwing a flagrant low blow, followed by both men brawling well beyond the end of the round.

PHOTOS BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

Pettway got up from a fifth-round knockdown (above) to put Brown on Dream Street in the sixth (top)

In the sixth, Brown, 43-4 (31), staggered Pettway, 38-4-1 (31), and seemed headed for victory—until the tide turned again, this time conclusively. A perfect left hook sent Brown crashing onto his back, where he left fans with the indelible but spine-chilling image of a knockout victim instinctively throwing punches at the air in a state of virtual unconsciousness.

YORY BOY CAMPAS KO 8 RAUL MARQUEZ

December 6, 1997

In the grand analysis, neither Yory Boy Campas nor Raul Marquez will be ranked among the better junior middleweight titlists. Marquez, a skilled guy with a boatload of flaws, was maneuvered deftly into winning the vacant IBF belt in April '97. Campas, a tough slugger with no defense at all, was fortunate enough to sneak into the mandatory position while Marquez was on top. Individually, they were nothing special. But together, they produced one of the most sickeningly spectacular slugfests in the history of the 154-pound division.

Chief among Marquez' many shortcomings was the fact that the skin around his eyes tended to swell up if he put his glasses on too harshly. Call it brave or call it stupid, but less than three months removed from a war with Keith Mullings that required 70 stitches to put his face back together, he took his chances with Campas.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Marquez fought bravely (above), but was a mess at the end (top)

For a couple of rounds, the gamble didn't seem too terrible. Marquez was outboxing the Mexican challenger with ease, until a gash opened over his right eye in the third round. By the fifth, that eye was nearly shut and both cheekbones were swelling up ghoulishly, so Marquez, aware he was running out of time, elected to go to war in hopes of knocking Campas out. It was scintillating stuff, but each time Campas, 69-2 (59), landed, Marquez, 28-1 (20), got a little uglier. He was badly rocked late in the seventh, and by the eighth, an almost blind Marquez, unable to avoid the torrent of hooks colliding with his jaw, was stopped on his feet.

His face was a horrifying sight. But the battle he and Campas produced was, for fans of blood-and-guts boxing, quite beautiful.

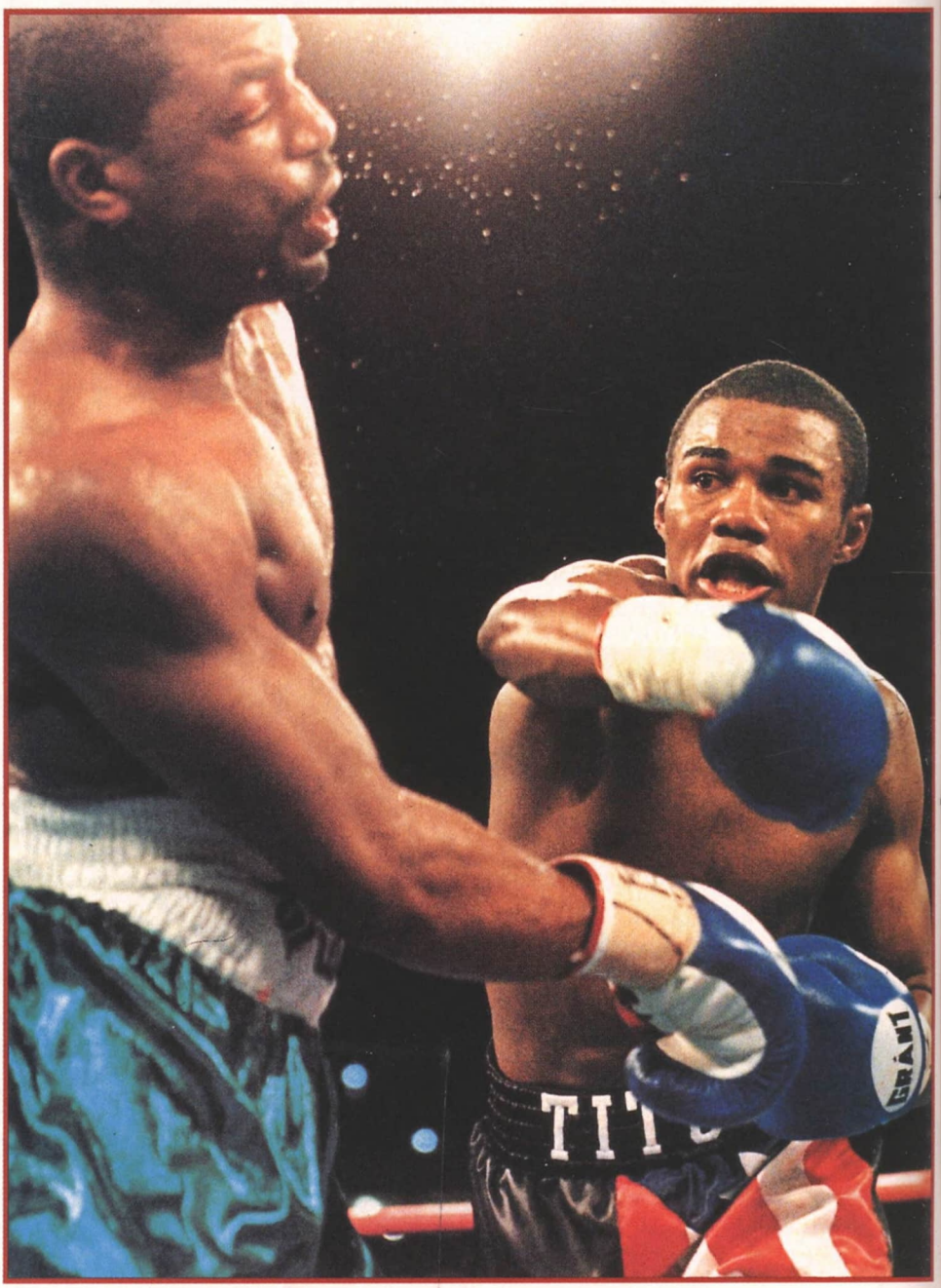
FELIX TRINIDAD W 12 DAVID REID

March 3, 2000

A lot of the time, fights are about finding out answers to questions. And there were plenty going into Felix Trinidad's challenge of David Reid for the WBA title. Was Trinidad going to be strong enough at 154 pounds? Was Reid taking the fight too soon? Was Trinidad going to be as easy to outbox as Oscar De La Hoya made him look in his previous fight? Was the oft-knocked-down Reid capable of taking Tito's punch?

In a rarity, all of our questions were answered, and we got a pretty darned good fight out of it too. Trinidad was strong enough, Reid was taking the fight too soon, "Tito" could be outboxed, but ultimately Reid couldn't take his punch, and that's what mattered most.

Slight underdog Reid struck first, dropping Trinidad to a knee with a sizzling straight right hand to the chin in round three. But Tito got up, as he has so many times in his career, and gradually took over. He began to affect Reid with bodyshots in the fifth and sixth, and then turned the fight completely in his favor with a left hook that floored Reid in the seventh. "The American Dream" never totally recovered, and Trinidad, 37-0 (30), continued to pile on the punishment, knocking Reid, 14-1 (7), down three more times in the 11th. Reid managed to last the distance, but he lost a wide unanimous decision, and was never the same fighter again. Tito was the real story, though, as he kicked off what would be a brief but exceptional run at 154 pounds in spectacular fashion.



Trinidad invaded junior middle in fine style with his slaughter of Reid

FELIX TRINIDAD KO 12 FERNANDO VARGAS

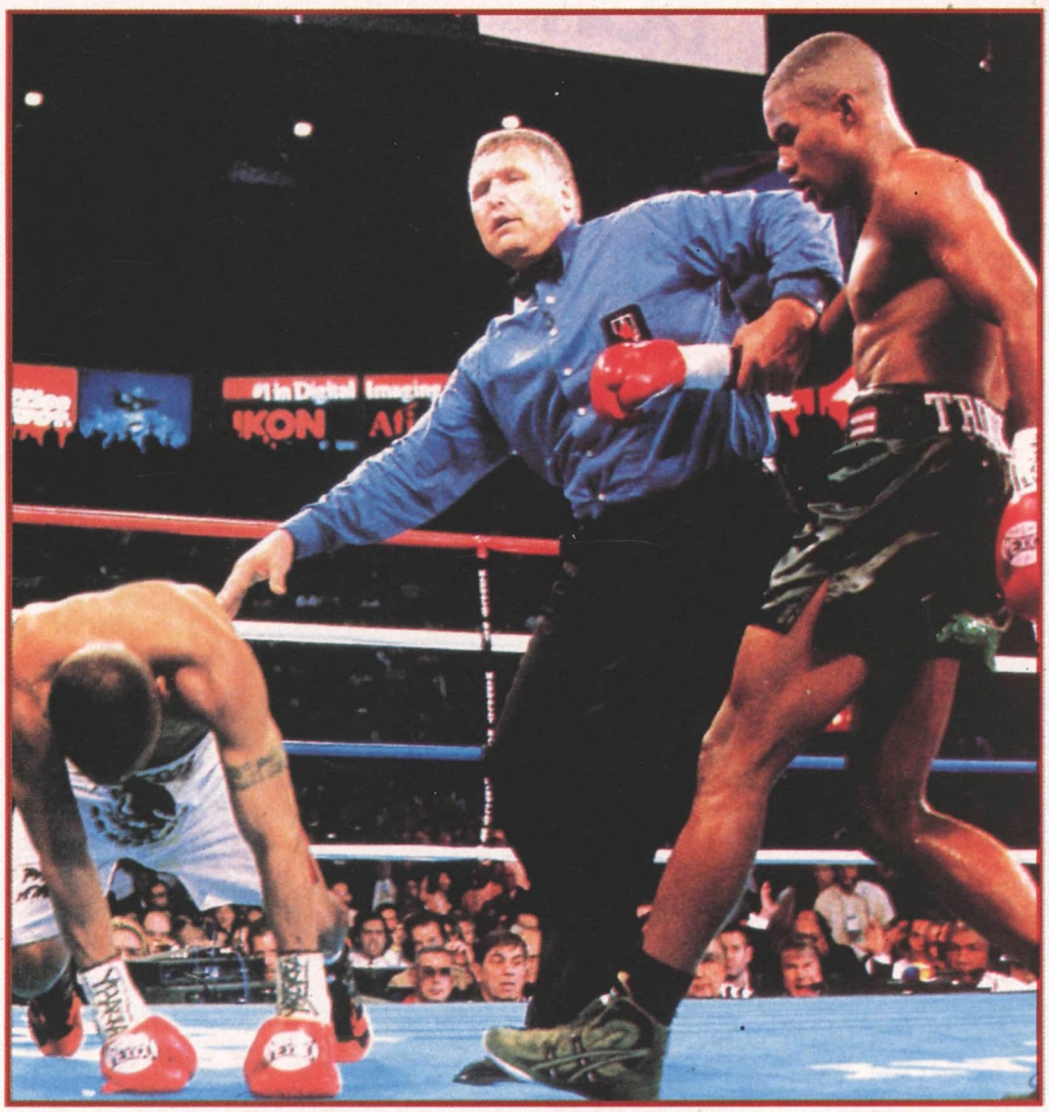
December 2, 2000

The perfect bookend—along with Felix Trinidad's fight with David Reid—to the Puerto Rican's incredible year in the junior middleweight division, the Trinidad-Fernando Vargas thriller was probably the greatest fight in the history of the weight class. With two confident, undefeated titleholders clashing in a war that featured six knockdowns, three point deductions, several shifts in momentum, and finally a brutal knockout, this fight had it all.

WBA kingpin Trinidad struck early—very early—knocking Vargas down for the first time in his career with a left hook 20 seconds into the fight. Another hook put Vargas down again moments later, but the IBF titleholder recovered from near-oblivion and soon mounted a comeback. "El Feroz" knocked Trinidad down with a hook of his own in the fourth, and evened up the fight when "Tito" lost a point moments later for a flagrant low blow. Vargas dominated round five, but Trinidad did damage in the sixth with a short right hand, before losing another point in the seventh for punching low again.

The ninth round was mesmerizing in its two-way violence, as both men whaled away with powershots. Trinidad, 39-0 (32), began to pull away in round 10, a round in which Vargas, 20-1 (18), took a pasting and lost a point for a low blow. But Vargas again came back in the 11th, wobbling Tito with a three-punch combination. In the 12th round, however, Trinidad's power settled the issue. Two huge knockdowns from left hooks were followed by a crushing right that left Vargas on all fours, barely conscious, and this magnificent, dramatic battle was history.

If De La Hoya-Vargas is half as memorable, it will certainly be a worthy addition to this list. □



Vargas crumbles in the 12th round of his war with Trinidad

YOUNG AGAIN AT 35

Mosley Enjoys His "Golden" Years

Mosley returned to the welterweight division for the first time since 2002 and breezed to a unanimous decision over top-10 contender Collazo. Still fighting like a young man at age 35, Sugar Shane is now in a perfect position to enhance both his bank account and legacy.

By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The scores declaring Shane Mosley the winner over Luis Collazo had hardly been read at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas when observers began debating where Mosley stands now. For every Mosley supporter who believes the 35-year-old has regained his form, there's a critic who shrugs off the Collazo bout and says, "What else can you show me?" After all, with a meager 13 knockouts to his name, Collazo couldn't hurt Mosley, so Sugar Shane was able to get comfortable and pound out a unanimous decision. Both sides have valid arguments, but here's the rub: If some unknown fighter came along and whitewashed Collazo the way Mosley did, we'd consider that fighter a serious welterweight threat. Maybe that's how we should view Mosley.

"Shane proved once again that he's one of the all-time greats," said Golden Boy Promotions' matchmaker Eric Gomez. "People didn't really know Collazo, but when Shane Mosley fights another big name, it's going to be a big event."

Late in the eighth round, after Mosley had clocked Collazo on the jaw with a right hand, light heavyweight champ Bernard Hopkins stood up in his second row seat and yelled encouragement. Hopkins even threw a few jabs at the air, as if he were trying to will himself into the fight as Mosley's spirit guide. Hopkins, along with Mosley and Marco Antonio Barrera, happens to be a shareholder in Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions. Richard Schaefer, chief executive at Golden Boy Promotions, believes the unlikely grouping of Mosley, De La Hoya, Hopkins, and Barrera, has reinvigorated all four fighters.

"I saw the same thing with Marco coming off being stopped by Manny Pacquiao, and Bernard after his losses to Jermain Taylor," Schaefer told HBO.com. "People wrote them off. The same thing happened to Shane after the fights with Winky Wright. Then they came together as business partners and became The Four Musketeers. They've re-energized each other. You see it at ringside—when one of them is fighting, the others are there pulling for

After being stung by a hard left in the second round, Mosley roared back to have Collazo under serious pressure at the bell. At times, it was hard to believe that Sugar Shane was 10 years older than his southpaw rival. "It feels good to be a welterweight again," said Mosley.

each other. They all wanted to prove they were older but they weren't done."

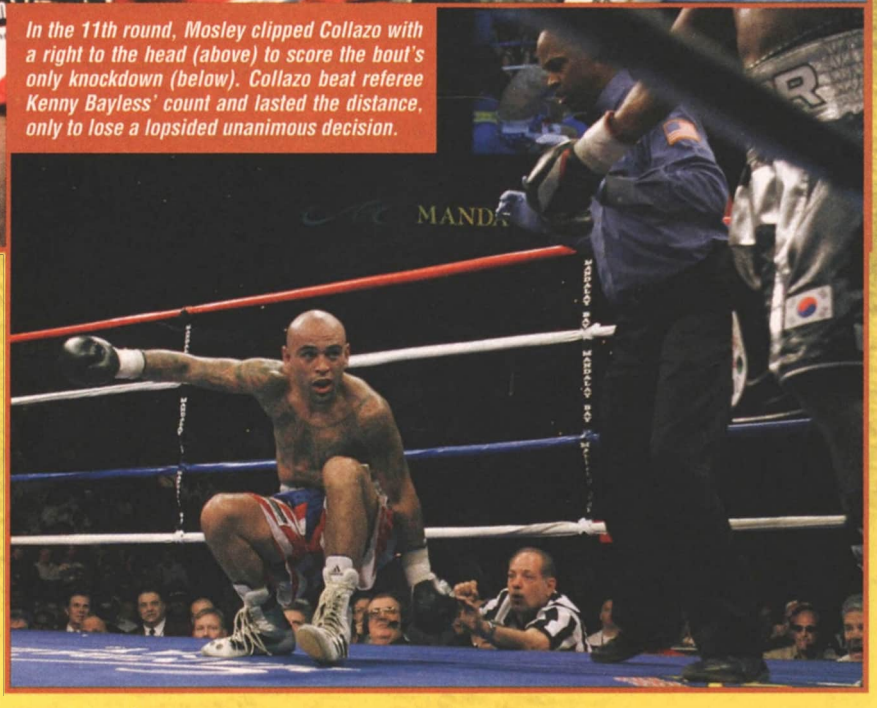
The old bulls of Golden Boy Promotions should wear matching blazers with the GBP insignia sewn onto the breast pocket, like a flat-nosed version of the Billionaire Boy's Club. Of course, it could just be that they are four elite fighters who would have revived their careers anyway, but there's something to what Schaefer said. These four wealthy pugs are intertwined like the workings of an old-fashioned timepiece.

In Hopkins' case, he's the ex-con who has been invited to break bread with the rich kid, De La Hoya. He's pocketed about $20-million since joining GBP, and provides GBP their very own living legend, as well as his brand of street cred. Barrera, the dour Mexican icon, gets some glamour by his association with De La Hoya; by having Barrera under his umbrella, De La Hoya gets closer to the vast Mexican audience. But De La Hoya's smartest move was to open GBP's doors to Mosley.

Mosley is a kind, unassuming fellow with hardly an evil bone in his body. Can we say the same about Hopkins? No. Mosley is also more exciting than Hopkins in the ring. He's also camera friendly and humble. Who among the GBP shareholders would you rather invite to a company dinner? We'll take Mosley by a landslide. (Well, we'd rather have Oscar, but it's tough to get him on the phone.) Mosley, the plainspoken father of five from Lynwood, California, is one of us, just like Joe Louis or Floyd Patterson was one of us. Mosley even has a pushy wife at home controlling the money, making him seem all the more like boxing's Everyman.

Hopkins and Mosley may differ in personality, but they have something in common in that they both own De La Hoya in the ring. By going into business with these men who defeated him, De La Hoya has done, in a roundabout way, what Don King has always done. King usually gets a percentage of the future of the opponent who beats his fighter. What makes it different is that De La Hoya had no guarantee how long

In the 11th round, Mosley clipped Collazo with a right to the head (above) to score the bout's only knockdown (below). Collazo beat referee Kenny Bayless' count and lasted the distance, only to lose a lopsided unanimous decision.



Hopkins and Mosley would continue to generate income as performers. Golden Boy recognized their potential value to the company in terms of their ability to seek out and sign talent.

At this point in time, Hopkins, Mosley, De La Hoya, and Barrera remain Golden Boys' most valued clients. Though all four are nearing the ends of their careers, there are a lot of large paydays ahead for each. And Mosley certainly didn't hurt his value with his performance against Collazo.

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Mosley celebrates his victory over Collazo with his father/trainer, Jack Mosley, and fellow Golden Boy Promotions stockholder Bernard Hopkins. Oscar De La Hoya has also made Marco Antonio Barrera an officer in his company, and all four fighters have reinvigorated their careers since joining forces.

From the get-go, Mosley peppered Collazo's torso and kept him off-balance. At one point in the first, he stepped on Collazo's foot and popped him with a right hand that sent the Puerto Rican New Yorker staggering backward. It was a tactic from the days of Bummy Davis and Fritzie Zivic, but Mosley didn't rely on too many veteran's tricks. He wasn't there to conserve energy and steal rounds; he was there to impose his will.

Collazo, 27-2 (13), had one big round, the second. In that round he slammed Mosley between the eyes with a straight left that sent Mosley into the ropes. The fighters smiled at each other, but Mosley was snarling by the end of the round when he trapped Collazo and blazed away. At the bell, Mosley, in a rare show of cockiness, raised his right arm and walked triumphantly back to his corner.

Looking lithe and quick at 147, Mosley regained control of the fight in the third and never allowed Collazo back in. When Collazo landed a blow, Mosley fired three or four in return. An accidental head clash opened a small cut on Collazo's left eyelid during the fourth, but the blood didn't affect the fight. It merely bubbled up like a tiny teardrop and rolled down Collazo's cheek.

Mosley started unleashing his right hand in the fifth, throwing it with precision to Collazo's head, and then ripping it to the body. Collazo kept trying, but gradually showed signs of fatigue, slipping to the canvas late in the sixth. From then on, every right hand Mosley landed seemed to make Collazo sag. Very late in the 11th, Mosley landed a glancing right hook that sent Collazo bumbling onto the seat of his colorful trunks.

"It wasn't a hard shot," Mosley admitted. "I didn't catch him flush. It had to do with him being off-balance and he fell down. I knew he wasn't hurt, but the ref ruled it a knockdown."

Mosley, 44-4 (37), could have given a glass-blowing demonstration during the 12th and still won the decision, but he came out banging with his right hand and stayed in Collazo's face the entire round. During the final seconds of the bout, he and Collazo gave the scant crowd a thrill by exchanging wicked left hooks. Collazo's hook was probably his best punch of the night, but as he'd done all evening, he was content to land one blow at a time and not follow up. Ringsiders saw the bout somewhat closer, but official judges Duane Ford and Nobuaki Uratani scored the bout 118-109, and Adalaide Byrd scored it 119-108, all for Mosley.

"About the third round I knew I'd be able to hit him with different shots,"

Mosley said. "It felt like I was the southpaw and he was the right-hander."

The third was also pivotal for Collazo. "I hurt my left hand in the third round and I wasn't able to fight the way I wanted to," Collazo said. "I hurt it in training. I wish I could have been more effective. I did the best I could do. Shane came to fight. He did his job tonight."

Of course, all wasn't rosy at Mandalay Bay. Golden Boy Promotions, perhaps saving their energy for the Cinco de Mayo blast between De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather, did a poor job of promoting Mosley-Collazo. Regardless of his talent, Mosley has never been a big draw. Only 5,761 attended the show. This was unfortunate because Pernell Whitaker and Roy Jones built careers on fights that weren't half as entertaining as Mosley-Collazo. But if anyone saw the arena as half-full rather than half-empty, it was Mosley.

"It feels good to be a welterweight again," Mosley said. "I felt light on my feet. I want to keep myself in shape and maybe fight again in June. I am going to keep myself in shape and tuned up."

Following Mosley's knockout of Fernando Vargas last July, he met with Schaefer, De La Hoya, and Gomez, to plan his future. De La Hoya allegedly suggested Mosley fight Mayweather, but Mosley opted to take time off. That meant De La Hoya would get the first chance at Mayweather, but all agreed Mosley had plenty of options. Possible opponents include Kermit Cintron, Miguel Cotto, and Antonio Margarito. Those bangers would give Mosley a tougher time than Collazo, but Mosley's craftsmanship and speed would make him hard to bet against. If Ricky Hatton continues to struggle with weight at 140, an aging hand like Mosley could be just what Hatton needs at 147.

"Hatton would be the preferred fight," Gomez told THE RING. "It would be great, explosive. We had one conversation with Hatton's promoter, Artie Pellulo. Maybe after Hatton fights Castillo, if he comes out all right. And if Mayweather beats Oscar, it's natural that Floyd and Shane fight. Mosley will fight anybody. He's so simple to work with. It's a pleasure to work with the guy."

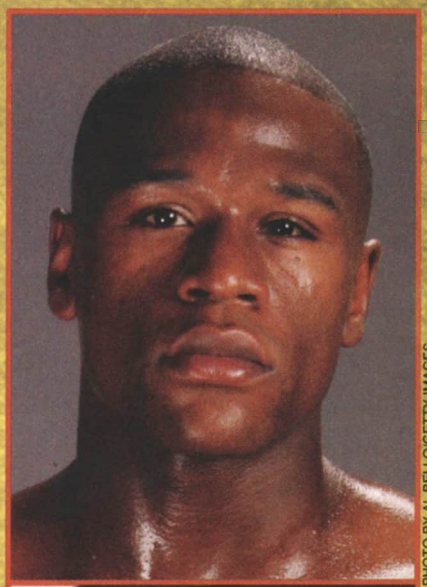
"It's not like I have to fight for money anymore," said Mosley. "If I'm going to be the best fighter out there I have to stay busy. I have to fight these young, hungry fighters."

Regardless of what transpires in Mosley's future, it's all gravy. He's already made the crazy money fighters dream about, he's won titles in three weight classes (most notably the IBF lightweight title that he defended eight times), and he's twice beaten the most popular fighter in the sport. Mosley will be remembered, if not as an all-time great, as one of the best of this era, while the fighters who have beaten him, Vernon Forrest and Wright, may fade from memory. And consider this: Mayweather seems to be basing his entire legacy on trying to beat De La Hoya, something Mosley did eight years ago with considerably less fanfare.

For some of us, Mosley's defining moment may have been during the hours after his second bout with De La Hoya. Mosley won, but De La Hoya was crying about unjust scoring and demanding an investigation. It was Oscar at his worst. In fact, it was boxing at its worst. But Mosley didn't use the opportunity to bash De La Hoya or call him a sore loser. He merely said De La Hoya was emotional, and left it that. Mosley's often been called an overgrown kid or a man-child, but in the middle of a controversy, he remained a gentleman. Granted, if Mosley were just a little more obnoxious, he might generate more interest, but that's not his style.

So where does Mosley stand now? He's just about where he's always been. It's a blessing and a curse that Mosley arrived at the same time as De La Hoya. It's a blessing because he beat De La Hoya. It's a curse because the public, for some reason, only loves one fighter at a time. It loved Mike Tyson, not Lennox Lewis. It loved Jack Dempsey, not Gene Tunney. Mosley has to settle for a runner-up position in this era of The Golden Boy. Still, the sport is better for his presence. As is HBO, Golden Boy Promotions, and the welterweight division. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.



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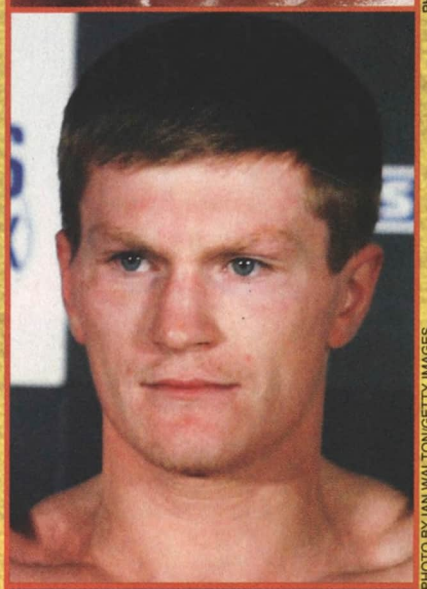

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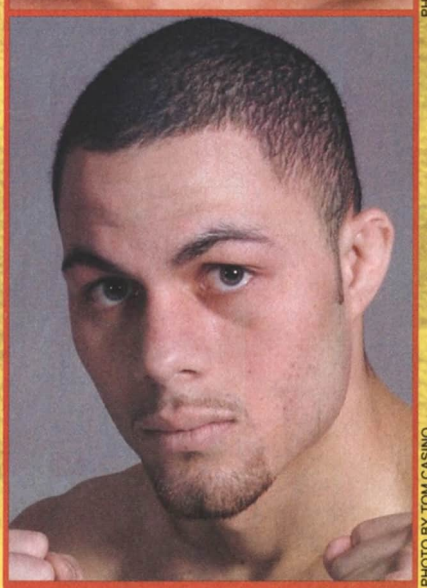
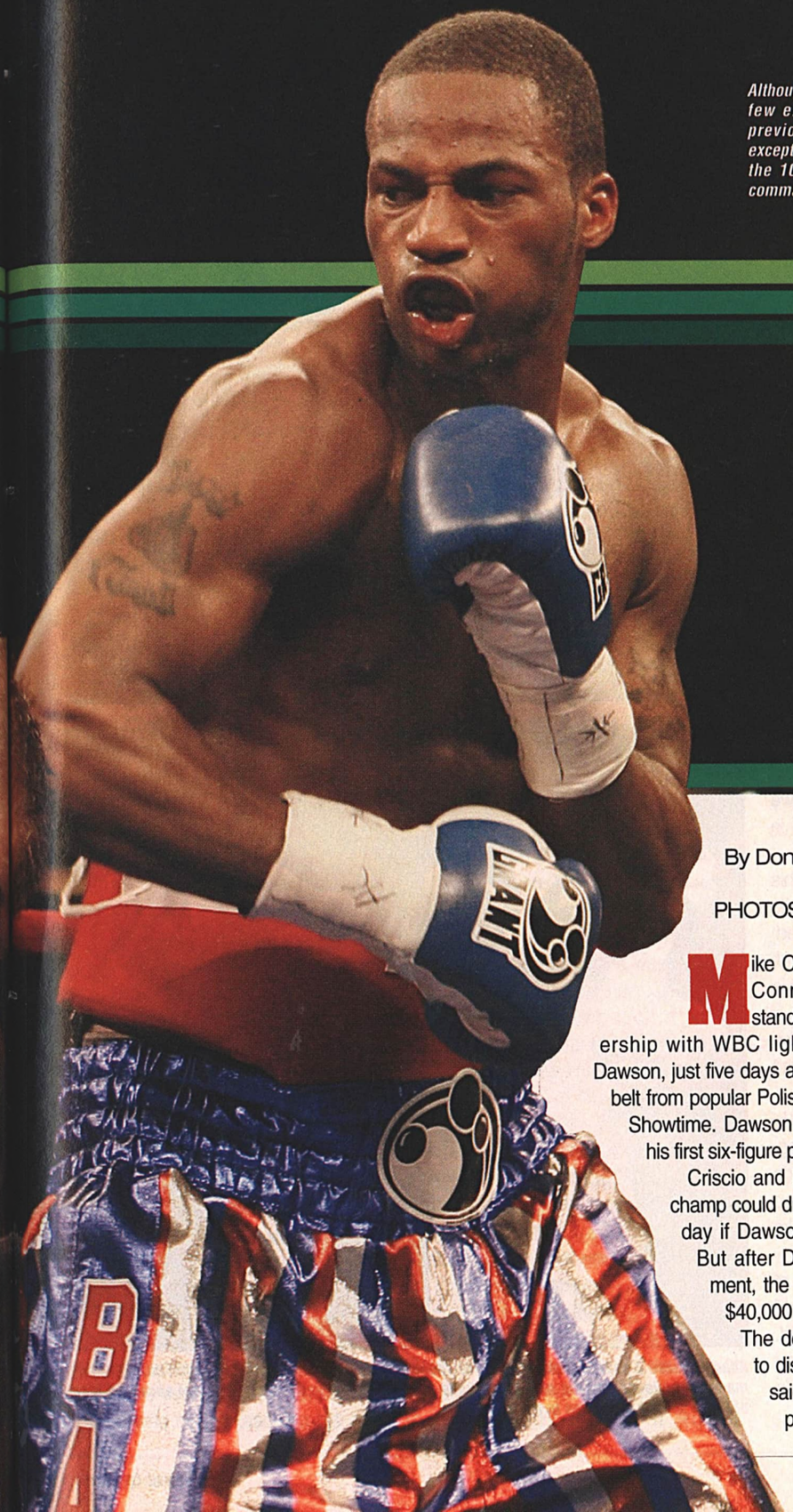


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Floyd Mayweather (top), Ricky Hatton (center), and Kermit Cintron (bottom) are all possible future opponents for Mosley, who has always been willing to fight anybody.

DOWNPAYMENT ON STARDOM?

DAWSON DRIVES OFF WITH HIS FIRST BELT AFTER UPSETTING ADAMEK



Although Dawson was a live underdog, few expected him to dominate the previously undefeated Adamek. But except for a knockdown he suffered in the 10th round, "Bad Chad" was in command throughout the 12-rounder.

By Don Stewart

PHOTOS BY SCOTT FOSTER

Mike Criscio was beyond angry. The Connecticut fight manager was standing at a New Haven car dealership with WBC light heavyweight titlist Chad Dawson, just five days after "Bad Chad" seized his first belt from popular Polish slugger Tomasz Adamek on Showtime. Dawson was ready to spend some of his first six-figure purse on his first new car.

Criscio and Dawson were initially told the champ could drive an Escalade off the lot that day if Dawson put down $35,000 in cash. But after Dawson made the down payment, the shysters decided they needed $40,000 before handing over the keys. The dealers went off by themselves to discuss the situation, and Criscio said their voices were accidentally picked up on a speakerphone:

Dawson delivers a left to Adamek's face out of his southpaw stance. His hand speed is such that he can find the target even when his opponent's guard is high. Afterward, Adamek admitted that he'd never fought anybody as quick as Dawson.

"[Bleep] those [bleep]holes. Who the [bleep] do they think they are?"

"Chad said my head turned red as a tulip," Criscio said. "It was about to explode." Criscio wanted to tear the place apart, as would most of us. Dawson remained remarkably calm, though. He ended up settling things by issuing a simple ultimatum: Give me the keys, or we go someplace else. Dawson drove off in his new Escalade a short while later.

"I don't think there's a way to get this kid mad," Criscio said. "He's just so docile and quiet and humble and kindhearted. He loves his family, his kids, his girlfriend. He feels for people. I can't believe this kid's a boxer.".

As a fighter, that kind heart might be Dawson's only flaw, though it hasn't slowed him down yet.

The gifted 6'3" southpaw's skills are in full bloom at age 24. He's clever, strong, and difficult to tag. Anyone who watches him for half a round will notice his top attribute—hand speed that already ranks among the top in the sport.

"What separates Dawson from some of the old-timers in the division is his speed," Showtime analyst Steve Farhood said. "He's a real physical specimen. When you add the fact that he's a lefty, he could be a factor in the division for a long time."

For the first nine rounds against the previously unbeaten Adamek, Dawson, 23-0 (15) with 1 no-contest, turned what was supposed to be a competitive fight into one-sided boxing lesson. He kept his right jab buried in his slightly shorter opponent's face, made good use of an improving left hand, and continually moved out of danger.

"I just wanted to impress everybody," Dawson said. "Adamek was a good fighter. I made the fight easy."

Adamek , 31-1 (21), went down in the seventh, and Criscio felt Dawson could have finished him on a few occasions, but decided to back off. "They would've stopped the fight several times if Chad would've put it to him," he said. "He's still cautious. He's got a good heart. He doesn't want to hurt a guy."

The stick-and-move strategy of new Dawson trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. was working so well that, before the 10th round, Adamek trainer Buddy McGirt told his fighter he was going to stop the fight if Adamek didn't do something. The defending titleholder responded with a sudden right to the jaw that put Dawson on his back.

"I wasn't confident that he was okay," Dawson promoter Gary Shaw admitted. "I

Adamek takes a painful-looking left to the nose en route to a unanimous decision defeat. Dawson's manager believes that his man could have stopped the rugged Pole had he not eased up a couple of times when his foe was in trouble.

New trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. administers to Dawson between rounds of the Adamek fight in Kissimmee, Florida. Mayweather believes Dawson should have a few more easy fights before tackling the likes of Bernard Hopkins or Antonio Tarver.

knew Adamek had big, big heart and keeps punching and never quits. I wasn't comfortable in any round. When Chad went down in the 10th, I saw all his dreams evaporate for a moment, and my dreams. When he got up, that's when I took somewhat of a breath, because I was holding my breath."

Dawson got up on shaky legs and survived Adamek's desperate assault to finish him off in the 10th and 11th, then cruised through the 12th to escape his first real crisis as a pro. The final tallies were a comfortable 118-108, 117-109, and 116-110 for Dawson.

"He was much quicker and I was slower," Adamek said afterward. "That's all. He was quicker, and that's why I lost the fight. He was the fastest I have ever seen."

The soft-spoken Dawson might not have the stereotypical raging demeanor many tend to associate with fighters, but he certainly has boxing genes. His father, Rick Dawson, was a journeyman back in the 1980s who began teaching his son the sport at age five.

Hoping to find better training, Rick moved his family of seven children from South Carolina to New Haven when Chad was seven. The Dawsons were so poor at times that they had to wrap up things they already had and exchange them as Christmas gifts. It was the type of hardscrabble upbringing that so often leads young men to put on a pair of gloves. "I always wanted to be a boxer since I was a little kid," Dawson said. "I just loved boxing."

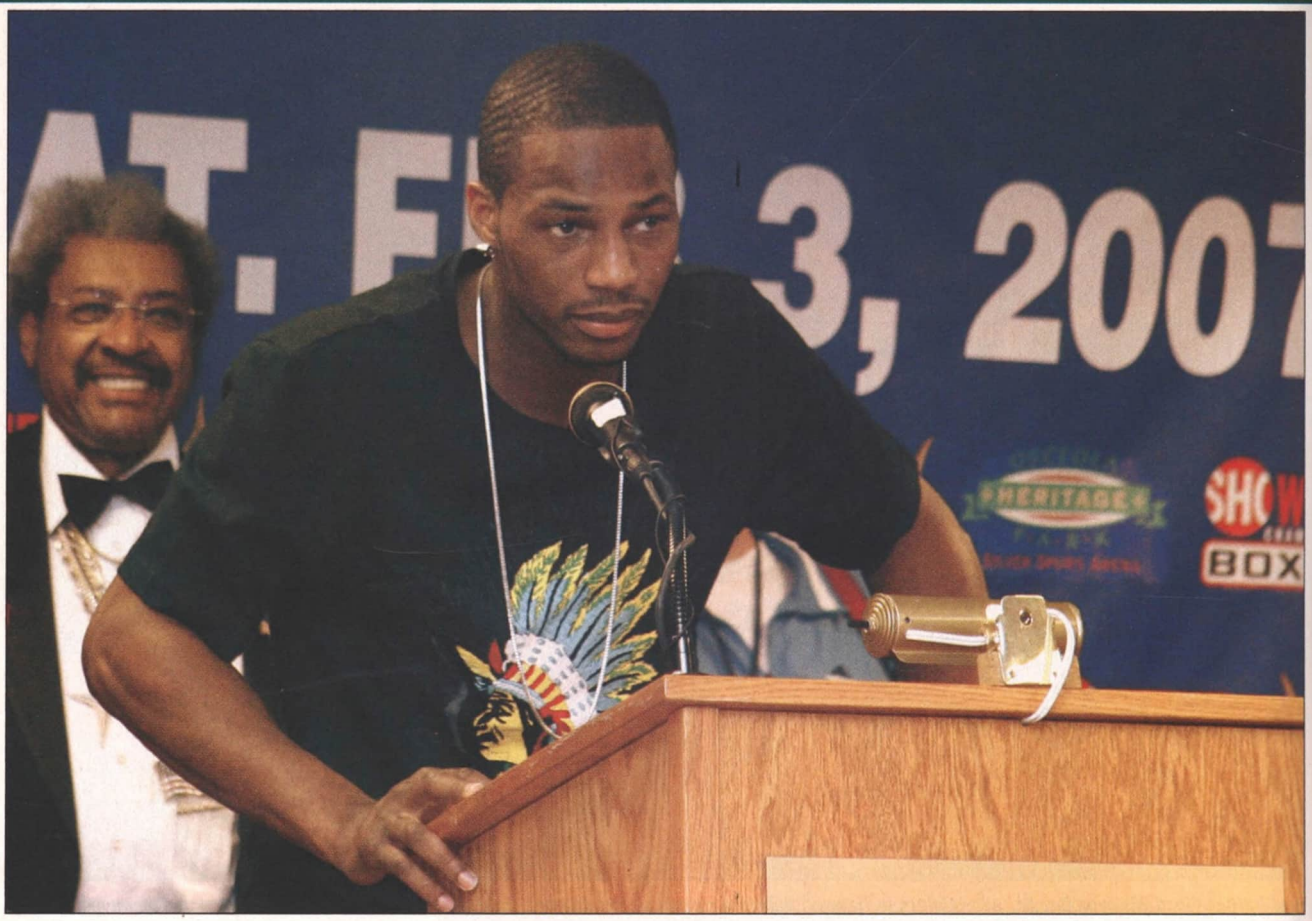
At age 11, he began working at New Haven's Ring One boxing club with local trainer Brian Clarke. The quiet Dawson was so shy in the gym that he often had to speak to Clarke through his brother, Ricky. "He wouldn't talk to me for three or four years," Clarke told the *Hartford Courant* in 2002.

Just before his freshman year, Dawson quit boxing to focus on high school basketball. Not interested in the class work that went with it, Dawson admits he began slacking as a sophomore. He wound up dropping out of school and re-devoting himself to the fight game.

Dawson went 30-4 in his last 2½ years as an amateur. He was the only American to medal at the 2000 Under-19 World Championships in Hungary, where he won the bronze. Dawson turned pro in August of 2001, at age 19, with an untelevised second-round stoppage of Steve Garrett on a *ShoBox* undercard.

Those early years were a bumpy ride. Some blame it on immaturity, some on his handlers, others on outside influences. Whatever the case, Dawson and Clarke had a falling-out in 2002. Dawson went through several trainers, including a return to Clarke in 2004, before landing with Mayweather.

Meanwhile, unlike that day at the car lot, Dawson was growing impatient with manager Lou Mayo and promoter Jimmy Burchfield, who he said kept



Dawson addresses the media following his victory over Adamek. Although the soft-spoken titleholder doesn't seek the spotlight, his management believes endorsement deals will be part of the fighter's future.

him rooted in New England. The admittedly disinterested Dawson soon suffered what he dubbed the low point of his career. After shutting out the unaccomplished Aundalen Sloan in March of 2004, Dawson tested positive for marijuana, and the verdict was changed to a no-contest.

Enter Criscio, a local businessman who owned a store next the YMCA where Dawson trained as a kid. A former football player who had stints in the USFL and CFL, Criscio had never been involved in the fight game when he took over as Dawson's manager in April of 2005.

Under Criscio, Dawson bolted from Burchfield to Shaw in somewhat of a messy split, and began working in Florida with two-time Boxing Writers Association of America Trainer of the Year Dan Birmingham. Criscio also started helping out with living expenses for Dawson, his girlfriend, and his two children, which was a nice lift for a fighter who previously had to work on a masonry crew and in a restaurant. "We've been around each other for years," Dawson said of his manager. "It's like a family relationship."

It was a turning point for Dawson. "In two years, he went from a boy to a man over night," Criscio said. "He's just changed 1,000 percent. He wasn't happy before. He'd disappear. He wouldn't fight. Now, he's asking when he's leaving for camp. He's ready to go."

Dawson's performance against Adamek solidified his place as a young player in a division topped by fading stars. Now Dawson can strengthen his resume by pounding on the carcasses of the old guard, much like a young Joe Louis did 70 years ago.

Last summer, Shaw was hesitant to put Dawson in against his first top-10 opponent in veteran Eric Harding (as was the case against Adamek, Dawson got off the canvas to win a lopsided decision). Now Shaw is calling out just about everyone in the 175-pound vicinity. There's recognized champ Bernard Hopkins (age 42), along with former titlists Antonio Tarver (38), Glen Johnson (38), and Roy Jones (38). Criscio tosses in IBF belthholder Clinton Woods (35 in May).

Shaw said Dawson, who was fighting at 160 two years ago, would drop to 168 to fight middleweight champ Jermain Taylor, but that two of his former fighters, Winky Wright and Jeff Lacy, would have to meet Dawson at light heavyweight. Wright and Lacy still train with Birmingham, whom Dawson left after beating Harding.

"If he is good enough to pretty much dominate Adamek, there aren't any light heavyweights he has to fear or be scared away from," Farhood said. "The division has a lot of older fighters who have marketable names. If I'm Gary Shaw, I try to get those guys."

Farhood feels Johnson would be the ideal opponent for Dawson's next fight, which Shaw hopes will be in June. Johnson was ringside for Dawson-Adamek, and a week after the fight his promoter called out Dawson in a press release.

"Johnson doesn't bring anything to the table," said Criscio, who would prefer higher-profile dates with Hopkins, Jones, Tarver, or Wright.

Coming off a split decision loss to Woods in England, Johnson is the most realistic choice. Wright and Hopkins are looking for mega-bucks matchups, possibly with each other, and Dawson's star hasn't ascended to that level yet. Tarver might have eaten his way out of the division, and Jones continues to negotiate his way out of fights.

The one name that doesn't come up among the Dawson camp is WBO beltholder Zsolt Erdei, rated number two in the world by THE RING. The dangerous Hungarian would present an awkward matchup for Dawson or any other light heavyweight. But as long as he remains a European-based force known in America only to hardcore fight junkies, Erdei figures to be avoided like a public toilet seat.

"It doesn't matter," Dawson said. "Whoever. Bernard's a great champion. Roy's a great champion. Antonio Tarver's a great champion. They're all still live guys."

One of the few voices of caution comes from Mayweather, who worked with Dawson for only five weeks heading into the Adamek fight. In fact, Dawson is the first southpaw Mayweather ever trained. The two admit they had a rough feeling-out process during their first couple of weeks together before Dawson adjusted to Mayweather's hefty demands.

Mayweather would like to have a couple more fights with Dawson before taking on the big names. "He doesn't need to go that fast," the veteran trainer said. "He can have a good couple of tune-ups, and he can enjoy his title and still at the same time learn what the game is all about. I think he needs to have a chance to get in and get experience, like everybody else."

It's scary to think Dawson hasn't hit his peak yet. If that's true, he could reach a level of mastery where his one-sided fights are almost as tough to watch as *The Naked Trucker And T-Bones Show*. Think "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather versus Carlos Baldomir. His hit-and-not-get-hit style, coupled with that tender heart, could be the formula for plenty of boring shutout decisions.

Big surprise: Criscio and Shaw aren't worried about their fighter's potential mainstream appeal. They believe Dawson will shed his cautiousness and learn how to finish off opponents. They believe he has the body to eventually fight for the heavyweight crown, as just about every great light heavy has tried to do. They believe he's well-spoken and humble enough to land endorsement gigs.

For now, all of that is secondary for Dawson, who seems happiest when he's at home in New Haven with his family between fights. "I don't like attention," he said. "Unless my name is on a headline for a big fight, that's all I care about. The other stuff, that doesn't matter."

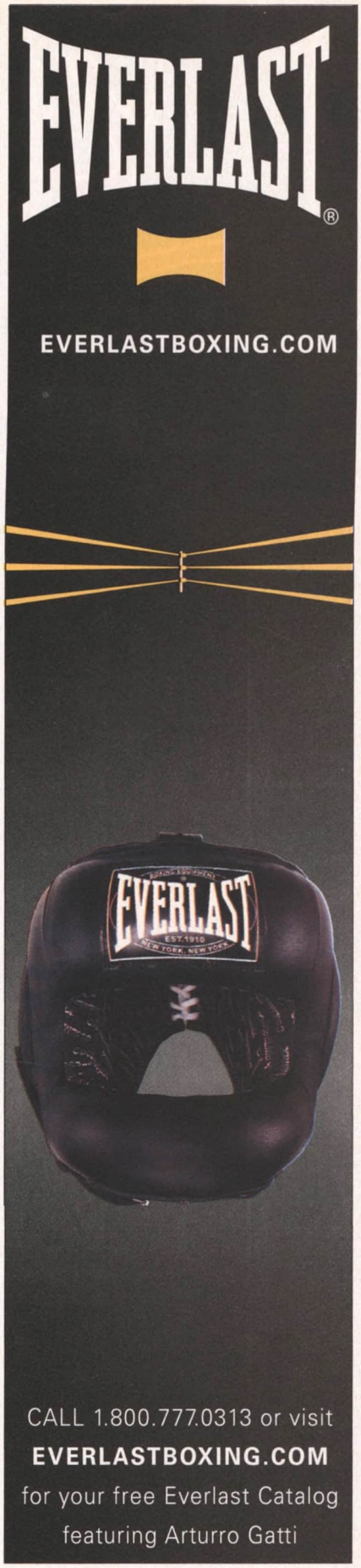
In other words, just give him the keys and let him go.

"I love the kid," Criscio said. "I love him like my own child. When we won the title, everyone was in tears on the stage. I don't cry, but I broke down. We finally did it. When we got together, people said that he's this and he's that. But I believed in the kid. I knew he would rise to the occasion and I knew he'd be champ.

"After the fight, I said to him, 'Thank you for bringing me along on this trip.'"

Seems like it's just getting started. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.



KELLY PAVLIK

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Pavlik walks away as referee Raul Caiz counts out Jose Luis Zertuche at the 1:40 mark of the eighth round. Even though there are no top contenders among his 30 consecutive victims, Pavlik claims he's ready for middleweight champion Jermain Taylor (right).

WANTS TAYLOR AND THE TITLE NOW

Does He Have A "Ghost" Of A Chance?

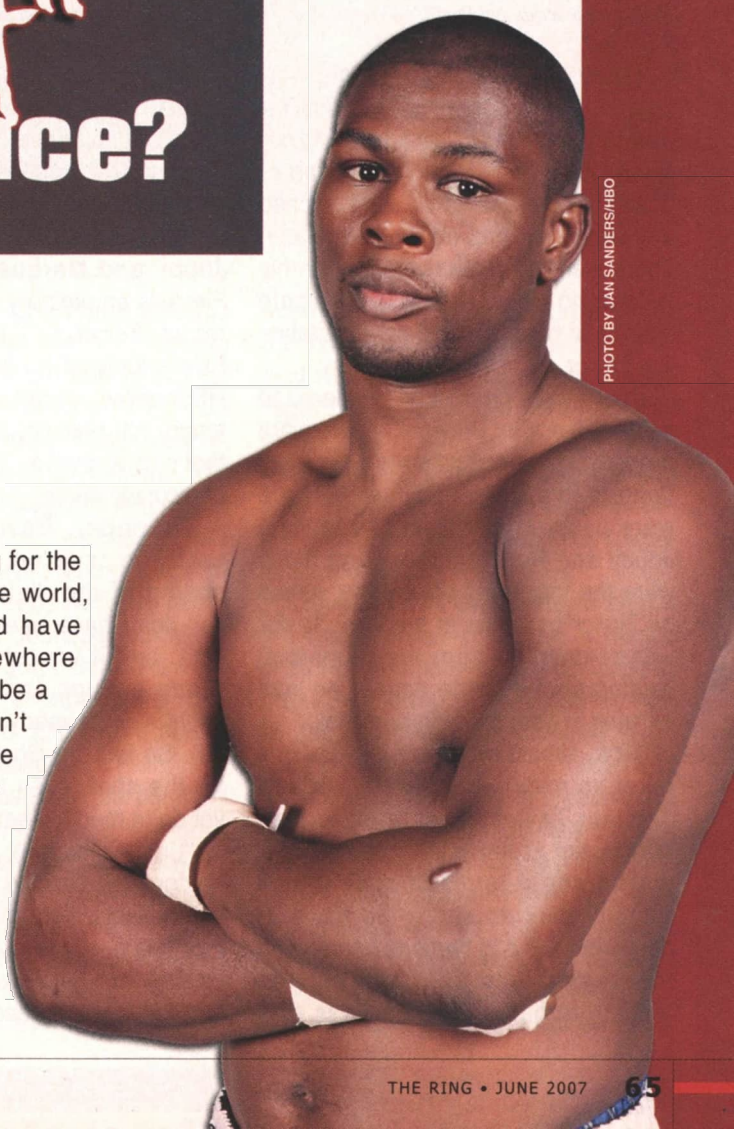


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

By Eric Raskin

You would think that before fighting for the middleweight championship of the world, a would-be challenger should have defeated a top-10 contender somewhere along the way. Logically, that should be a prerequisite. And given that he hasn't met those requirements, it seems quite premature for Kelly Pavlik to be calling out Jermain Taylor.

But Pavlik has history on his side in his quest for a title shot sooner rather than later. And, by history, we mean a trip in the time machine to the bygone era that is ... 2005.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Pavlik forces Zertuche into the ropes with a right to the body. The Mexican fought hard and helped provide an entertaining scrap, but Pavlik's punching power ultimately proved too much for Zertuche to handle.

When Jermain Taylor fought Bernard Hopkins in July '05, the popular opinion was that "Bad Intentions" wasn't ready. Certainly, in terms of quality of opposition, he hadn't notched any wins that *proved* he was ready. There were no real contenders on his record, no opponents with a remote chance of beating a top-echelon talent like Taylor.

There were credible but undersized fighters like Alex Bunema. There were properly sized but ultimately ordinary fighters like Daniel Edouard. There were used-up ex-titlists like William Joppy and Raul Marquez. And those were the four most noteworthy names on Taylor's resume at the time. Taylor wasn't jumping from the proverbial wading pool into the ocean; he was jumping in from the bathroom sink.

Now, almost two years into Taylor's reign as middleweight champion, a Jermain Taylor clone is emerging. Maybe not in terms of fighting style, maybe not in terms of appearance (though they do share the shaved-dome look). But in terms of banging on the champion's door without the resume to back it up, Pavlik is now where Taylor was in 2005. Pavlik has dramatically increased the opposition in his last four fights, but there still isn't a true top-10 contender to be found on his record. Bronco McKart was a threat to top fighters around the same time Joppy and Marquez were. Lenord Pierre is an ordinary fighter with a nice record. Fulgencio Zuniga and the man Pavlik kayoed on January 27 in his HBO debut, Jose Luis Zertuche, are tough, hard-hitting, top-20 types. And that's in a division that, frankly, isn't particularly deep.

On paper, Pavlik shouldn't be ready to take on the undisputed champ of the division. But Taylor shouldn't have been ready for Hopkins, and it turned out he was just ready enough (and, as his critics might say, as ready as he would ever be). So is "The Ghost" ready enough for the shot, even though he hasn't yet done much to earn it?

"I definitely think I'm ready to fight Taylor," Pavlik said a few days after the Zertuche fight. Now bear in mind, Pavlik is a guy who, when he was still fighting four- and six-rounders in 2001 and 2002, was already telling his team he was ready for Oscar De La Hoya and Felix Trinidad. But his calling out of Taylor isn't purely based on his own self-belief. It's also based on the fact that he doesn't have the highest opinion of the reigning champ.

"Honestly, I think Zertuche's every bit as tough as Taylor. The guy had never been down before I fought him. I know Taylor is the champ, but I think he's only about the fifth or sixth best at middleweight," Pavlik asserted. "There's a lot of guys that I would rank higher than him. Jermain Taylor does not like to get hit at all—but he does get hit against good fighters. And I'm a humble fighter, I'll never go in saying I'm going to knock somebody out, but I think I'll have a better chance of knocking out Taylor than I thought I did against Zertuche.

"Obviously the guy can fight. I'm not saying he's a pushover. He's a real champion, and he did what he did in the Olympics, but as far as top-five middleweights, I don't see him as that right now."

Most impartial observers would be inclined to disagree with that assessment, but even if you are wholly unconvinced of Taylor's boxing acumen, you have to say this for him: Starting with his title shot against Hopkins, he has taken on some elite fighters. There was "The Executioner" twice, then Winky Wright, and then Kassim Ouma.

"They're good fighters," Pavlik admitted, "but they're not big middleweight punchers. Winky Wright is a great, great fighter, a great world champion, but not at middleweight. The guy couldn't hurt nobody at junior middleweight, so at middleweight he's not a danger to anybody. And then Taylor fought Ouma, who's a great fighter, he's got a lot of heart, but he couldn't hurt nobody at junior middleweight either. And both of them guys backed Jermain Taylor up against the ropes the whole fight, both of them had him going backwards. Taylor, to me, he don't want to fight

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Some observers believe that Pavlik is currently the hardest puncher in the middleweight division. Judging from this image of "The Ghost" distorting his foe's face with a right, Zertuche would probably agree with that assessment.

anybody that has pop and who can fight a little bit. If Kassim Ouma and Winky Wright backed Jermain Taylor up, I definitely think I'm going to back him up and hit him on that chin."

If there is one highly proven quantity about Pavlik's game, it's that he does have real middleweight pop. In fact, at 6'2½", with that scary leverage on his punches that has allowed him to starch 27 of 30 opponents, including nine who had never been stopped before (Zertuche, McKart, and Zuniga among them), he might just be the hardest puncher in the division.

However, the assertion that Taylor doesn't want to fight anyone with heavy hands is debatable—especially since, according Taylor promoter Lou DiBella, the champ was pursuing a September fight with Pavlik until HBO suggested an alternate plan.

"We were negotiating with them, [Pavlik promoter Bob] Arum wanted to do that fight after we fight Sergio Mora, but HBO is hot and heavy for that eliminator between Edison Miranda—if he beats Allan Green—and Pavlik," DiBella explained. "We were discussing a deal with Arum, and the deal fell through because HBO wants to do a Pavlik-Miranda fight if Miranda beats Green. We were negotiating for Pavlik because, honestly, my attitude is I don't think Pavlik's ready for it, so I'd rather do it right now. I preferred to do it before he got a chance to get seasoned.

"But I think inevitably the fight will be made if Pavlik keeps winning. There are other issues here, like we're going to fight Mora, then we're going to look for probably another HBO fight in September, and then pay-per-view. So it's really a matter of what's ready for pay-per-view by that time. But the Miranda-Pavlik thing got ordered [by the WBC], and HBO loves that fight. And it builds up a bigger opponent. Right now, Pavlik and Miranda don't mean that much for Jermain, even though they're two up-and-coming guys. But I feel like a fight with the winner of the two of them becomes a legitimate mandatory."

Obviously, if Pavlik were to beat a guy like Miranda—or Green, or Wright, or Arthur Abraham—that would indeed make him a more marketable challenger and make him infinitely more qualified than he is now. As it stands at this moment, Zertuche is probably the all-around best opponent he's faced in the pros, which isn't saying a whole lot. To his credit, though, Pavlik took care of business against the Mexican in impressive style, beating him far more definitively than anyone else has.

Pavlik took about four rounds to get

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Pavlik took notice of the fact that the small, light-punching Kassim Ouma was able to back up Taylor in their December 2006 title bout (above), and figures that if he tags Taylor as well as he did Zertuche (right) the 160-pound title will change hands.

completely warmed up, taking a few more punches than his corner ideally would have liked him to take and looking especially available for left hooks. Round three featured fiery exchanges, as did the competitive fourth, but whenever Pavlik used his long jab, it gave him total control of the action. With about 15 seconds left in the sixth round and Zertuche still very much in the fight despite Pavlik arguably winning every round, Pavlik connected with a right hand to the jaw over the top of a lazy jab, sending Zertuche to the canvas. The bell rang before The Ghost had a chance to follow up.

Pavlik boxed extremely patiently and intelligently in the seventh, not going wild for the finish, but rather setting up his punches, the most noteworthy of which was another long right hand. Midway through the eighth, the ambidextrous Pavlik's most dangerous weapon, his left hook, collided with Zertuche's jaw, stunning him momentarily. Zertuche backed into the ropes—a major no-no against someone with Pavlik's range and power—and a sizzling straight right hand snapped Zertuche's head back. A right uppercut followed, and Zertuche, 19-4-2 (14), was out on his feet (and on his way to the canvas) when referee Raul

Caiz saved him at the 1:40 mark.

Obviously, Pavlik has the offense to potentially defeat anyone at middleweight. Defensively, there are some weak spots (Pavlik admits he gets "a little lackadaisical" because of his confidence in his own chin), but for the most part, he keeps his hands up high and doesn't get caught with more than one flush punch at a time. He doesn't have the fastest hands at 160 pounds—Taylor probably has the edge over him in the speed category—but he throws a variety of dangerous punches, including a sneaky and potent left uppercut. Pavlik controls the range of the action very well, always leaving himself punching room even when he lets his opponent get partway inside. And as Zertuche learned, the kid from Youngstown, Ohio, is a beast when he gets you on the ropes.

And that, potentially, is bad news for Taylor, who allowed both Wright and Ouma to pin him along the strands with regularity.

There may be nobody better qualified to assess this potential matchup than *Contender 2* winner Grady Brewer, the journeyman-turned-star who took on both Pavlik and Taylor in that earlier "journeyman" phase of his career. He lost a competitive eight-round decision to Taylor, as compared to a second-round knockout loss to Pavlik. So it seems a given that he was more impressed by The Ghost, right?

"No, no way I can say that," Brewer responded. "Those fights were at different times, and when I fought Kelly Pavlik, I had just about three or four days notice. I was nowhere near in shape to fight anybody of his caliber, and in the second round, I started fatiguing real quick and he took advantage of me. For Taylor, I prepared about four to five weeks.

"Pavlik definitely hits harder than Taylor does—you can tell that because of his knockout ratio—but I don't think that makes him better. Taylor showed me a consistency when I fought him. It's really hard to say, but if I had to give someone the edge, I think Jermain Taylor's big-fight experience might be the difference."

Normally, a common opponent is a fairly reliable source for comparing two fighters, but with Taylor and Pavlik, we can take it a step farther: They've actually fought each other already. At the 2000 Olympic Trials, from which Taylor emerged to represent the U.S. and win bronze in Sydney, the Little Rock fighter captured an 11-5 decision over Pavlik. And nobody denies that Taylor deserved the nod—not even Pavlik.

"A lot of times fighters say they got robbed, but he beat me," Pavlik admitted. "The main thing, without making any excuses, that was only my third open tournament, I was only 17. I was just happy enough to get as far as I did. He was in his 20s, he had that man maturity, he had that experience; he had over 200 amateur fights at the time. I think that maturity and experience helped him out. But now, I'm in my 20s, I have my man maturity, I've grown into my body, and I think that's the big difference now."

Jack Loew, Pavlik's trainer since age 10, agrees that Pavlik, 24, is an exponentially better fighter now. And he definitely doesn't feel the same way about Taylor.

"I don't think Jermain's changed much from the amateurs," said Loew. "When he throws his left jab, he drops his right hand. When he throws his right hand he drops his left hand. I don't see any change in Jermain Taylor at all, not even since adding Emanuel Steward as his trainer. I think he's an average fighter, but he's a kid coming off the Olympic team, he caught on with the HBO people, he was at the right place at the right time. I mean, he got the breaks, and God bless him. But is he the best middleweight in the world? No way, not by far."

Either we have an extremely vulnerable, overrated champion reigning over the middleweight division, or we have a potential challenger who's overconfident and selling the champ short. Pavlik hasn't particularly earned the right to show us which is the case. But as Taylor can attest, just because you haven't earned the shot doesn't mean you aren't ready for it. ■

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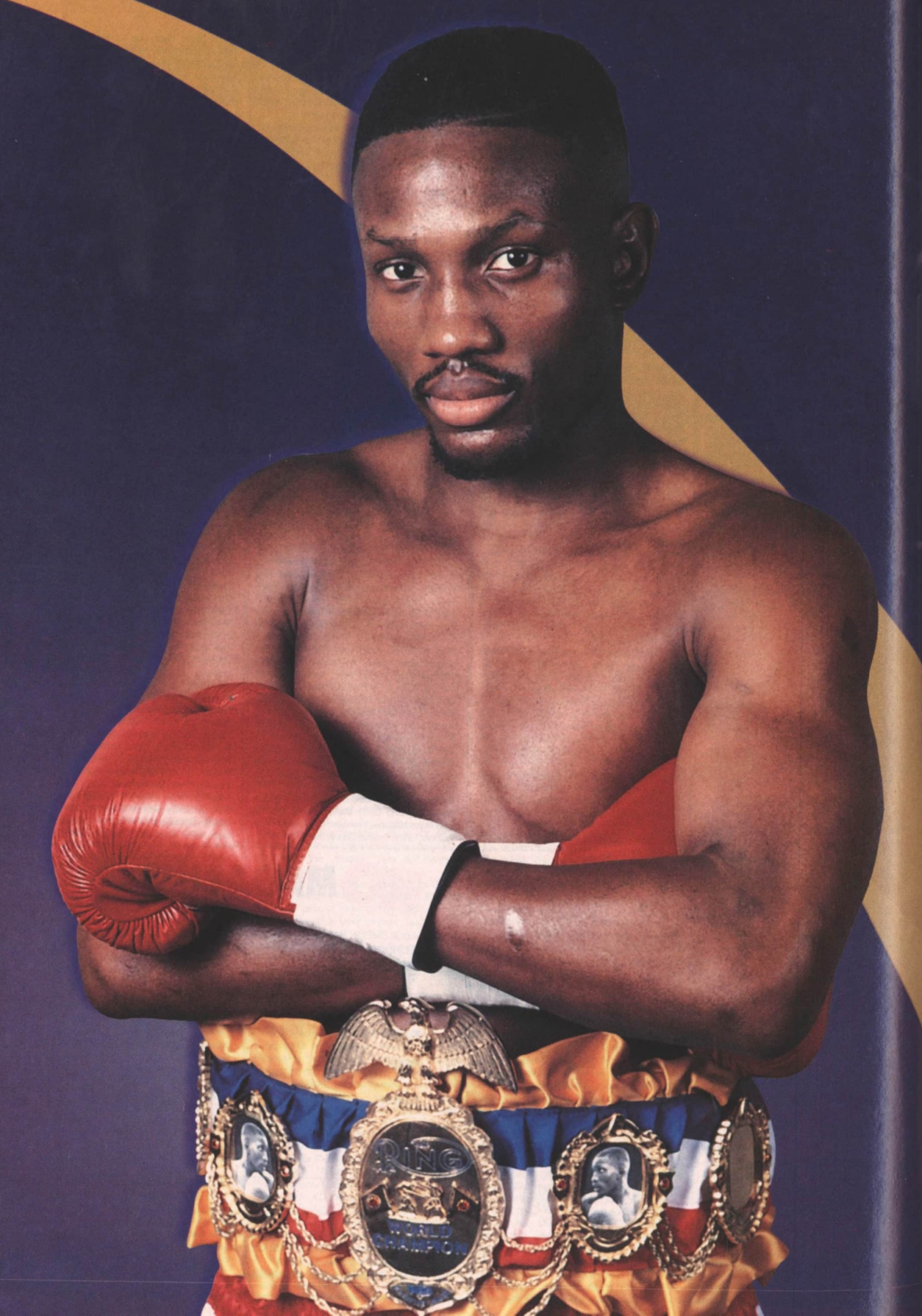


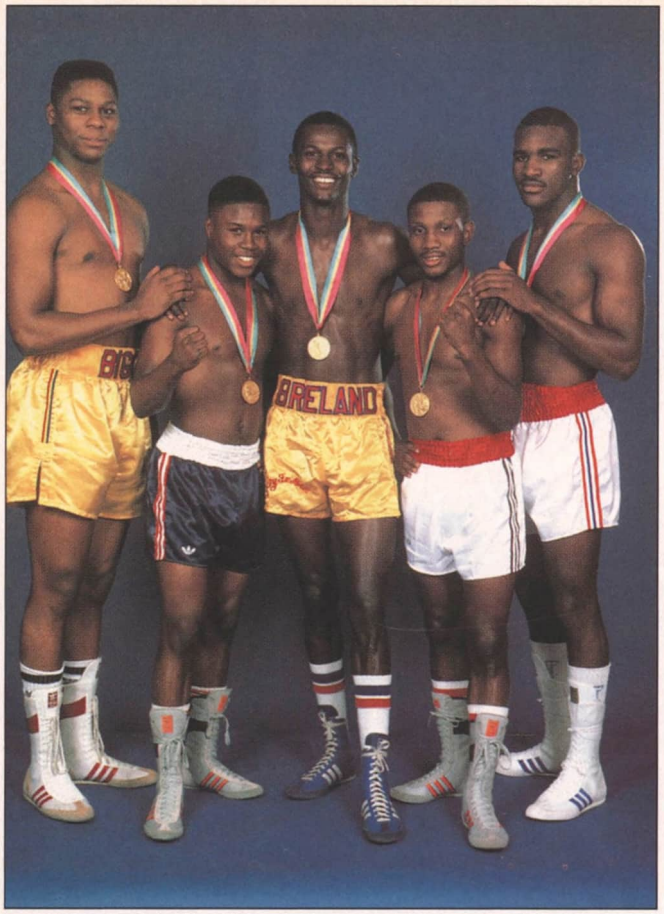
UNDENIABLE GREATNESS

PERNELL WHITAKER ENTERS THE HALL, WARTS AND ALL

By William Dettloff

It is both a credit to the boxing community and a minor upset that in June Pernell Whitaker will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. We would agree that on the surface this would appear a somewhat counterintuitive notion; there have been relatively few fighters over the last couple of decades whose resumes are as deep as Whitaker's.

Between the gold medal, titles in four weight classes, the nearly spotless record in title bouts and everything else, one couldn't appear



Whitaker, who won lightweight gold, poses with some of his 1984 Olympic teammates, all of who ended up signing with promoter Main Events. They are, from left to right: Tyrell Biggs, Meldrick Taylor, Mark Breland, Whitaker, and Evander Holyfield. Biggs was the only one to never win a title.

worthier. This is what a Hall of Fame career should look like. Everyone knew he would be inducted the moment he was eligible and no one in his right mind would oppose it.

It's still a credit to the fight community and a minor upset because from the start Whitaker had two things going against him. The first is that his never was a pleasing style from the point of view of the fans. It became clear very early on, from his amateur days, that he never would be an exciting television fighter and never a huge pay-per-view star unless he had a very popular partner such as Julio Cesar Chavez or Oscar De La Hoya.

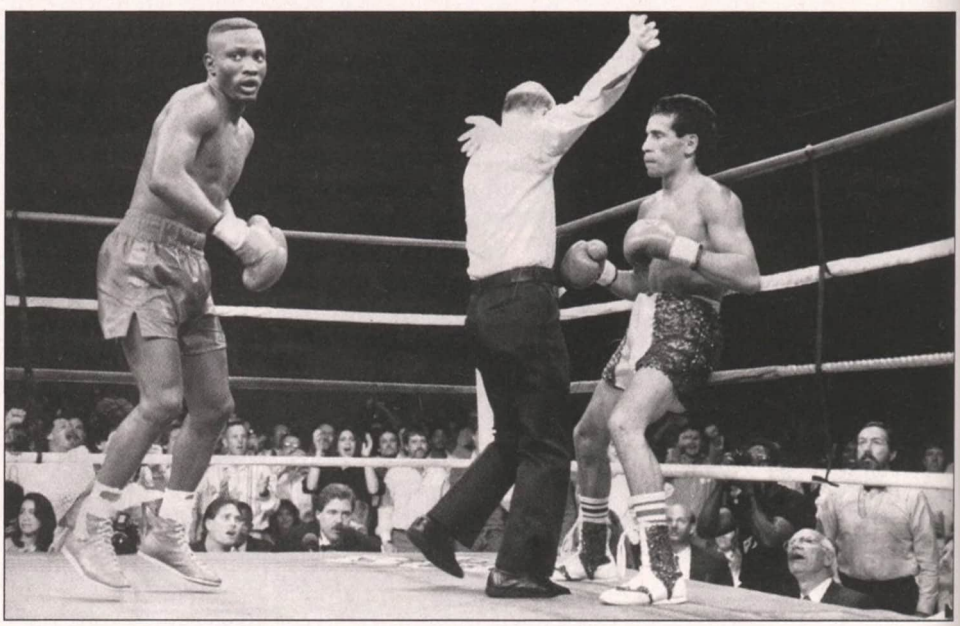
Very likely Whitaker wouldn't be exciting—or frankly, even reasonably entertaining to anyone except the nerdiest boxing geeks—if he were fighting King Kong with a bazooka. He wasn't that kind of guy and it wasn't his fault that there wasn't anyone around who could make him that kind of guy. He was too good. But to many, he was dull.

It wasn't as though Whitaker, 40-4-1 (17) with 1 no-decision, was a classical boxer-type, whose stand-up, fleet-footed style could be entertaining for its speed and obvious daring, say, like Floyd Mayweather's or Roy Jones'. There are moments in any Mayweather fight, and in most of Jones' fights, too, when even action-lovers would be forced to appreciate, maybe against their baser instincts, the beauty of a crackling combination or burst of sudden and uncommon speed. Just because a fight is a shutout over the distance doesn't mean it can't be entertaining, though it can be a struggle to make it both.

Though clearly quick, Whitaker didn't have that great, explosive speed going for him, like Jones did, or much of a punch either (at least after he rose in weight from 135), despite the occasional blowouts, such as those over Juan Nazario and Louie Lomeli. He had that subtle, relaxed, slip-and-slide southpaw style that looked easy to emulate and even easier to beat until you got in there with him and realized you couldn't hit him on the hip with a bamboo stick, even when he was within a foot of you.

Indeed, one can easily recall during Whitaker's prime the regularity with which cornerman Lou Duva would interrupt the baritone counseling of lead trainer Georgie Benton with a boisterous, "You're boxin' beautiful out there, baby!" It was mere show when Duva said it to his less gifted fighters, but perfectly apropos with Whitaker.

And when you finally were able to connect—*if* you were able to connect—you found out Whitaker had a pretty good jaw too. And all the while



Whitaker scored only 17 knockouts in 40 pro victories. But every now and then he blasted out an opponent, such as the previously undefeated Louie Lomeli, who was rescued by referee Al Rothenberg in the third round of a 1989 lightweight title bout held in Whitaker's hometown of Norfolk, Virginia.

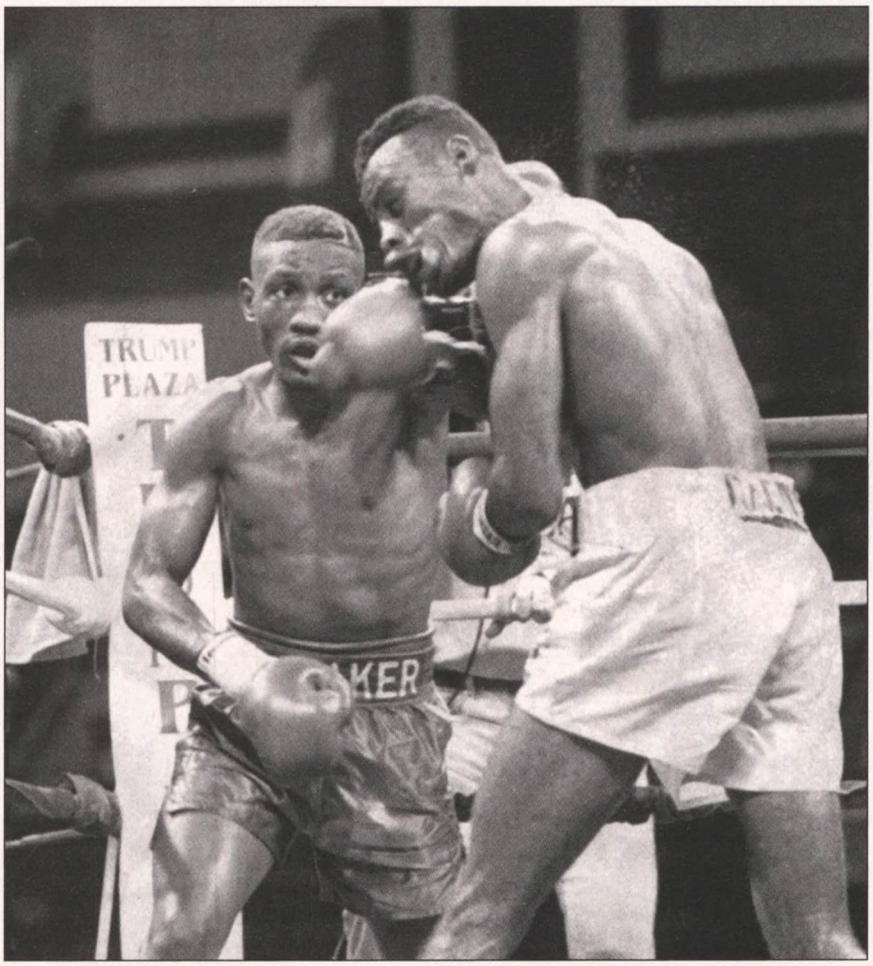
PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Cheerleader Lou Duva looks on as Georgie Benton gives Whitaker a few last-minute instructions in the locker room. Together, Duva and Benton did a fine job of bringing out the best in their brilliant student.

that he was making you miss, he was sticking you with counters that didn't knock you out but landed so squarely and so cleanly, and frequently to the body, that after a while you didn't want to punch anymore.

Before you knew it, 12 rounds had gone by and you were going home with a loss. Probably you weren't busted up or even bleeding, but you ached all over from the accumulation, and if you won even a round, you felt good about it because when Whitaker was at his best, it was a special occasion if a guy managed a single 10-9 against him.

It didn't matter really who it was or what the guy had going for him coming into it. Greg Haugen had beaten Jimmy Paul for the IBF lightweight title and had split a pair with Vinny Pazienza when Whitaker made him look the fool and took the title in 1989 in a wipeout of a fight *(see sidebar)*. Lomeli was undefeated when Whitaker flattened him. People were still calling Freddie Pendleton the best .500-fighter in the game when Whitaker whitewashed him, and Azumah Nelson was already one of the most respected older lions in the business when Whitaker beat him by



Whitaker demonstrates his precision punching, drilling Freddie Pendleton with a straight left to the chops. Pendleton put up a good fight, but lost a unanimous 12-round decision in their 1990 bout in Atlantic City.

unanimous decision. Roger Mayweather hadn't even started his reign yet as the WBC junior welterweight titlist when Whitaker outpointed him by a wide margin in March '87.

All the here-today-gone-tomorrow TV darlings wilted against Whitaker: Harold Brazier, Rafael Pineda, Buddy McGirt, Santos Cardona, even Julio Cesar Vasquez, whose WBA junior middleweight title Whitaker took in March '95, just for kicks, just to show everyone he could do it. Vasquez was 53-1 (35) at the time. Whitaker won by a combined 23 points on the three judges' scorecards.

He was wonderfully dominant, but the fights had a bland sameness about them that left all but the most studious bored and not a little discontented. For a prizefighter to be loved, he must provide some drama in the ring, either through a consistent vulnerability that threatens him in virtually every fight, or, if he's dominant, a capacity for sudden, explosive violence. Whitaker possessed neither of these virtues. There was little or no drama in even his more competitive affairs and he therefore elicited little passion from the fans outside perhaps those in Virginia. He was undeniably great and, to a great many, undeniably dull.

So it says good things about this business and about the fans that Whitaker will be inducted despite his inability to elicit passion. If you think we're reaching here, that being excit-

SWEET PEA'S GREATEST HITS

When a fighter has won less than half his bouts by knockout, it can be a little difficult to pick his most memorable wins. Let's face it: Many of Whitaker's decision victories were virtual repeats of one another. It was like watching Groundhog Day. He wasn't pushed very many times and there wasn't a lot of drama in his career. Still, these five, presented in chronological order, stand out.

W 12 Greg Haugen February 18, 1989: Okay, so Haugen was never going to be a legend, but "Mutt" was a good, tough fighter with wins over a fair number of high-quality guys. And when he was as good as he was ever going to get, he wasn't good enough to win more than a few seconds against Whitaker, who floored him in the sixth and outpointed him by scores of 118-109 and 120-107 (twice). That's a wipeout.

The draw with Chavez was a ripoff

W 12 Jose Luis Ramirez, August 20, 1989: Call it "Sweet Pea's Revenge." After the abomination that was their first fight, Whitaker gave Ramirez a shot at his IBF lightweight title and dominated even more completely than he had the first time. Except this time it was in Virginia and scored like the first one should have been: 120-108, 120-109, and 117-111, all for Whitaker.

ing or not isn't relevant to these discussions, remember that Rocky Graziano is in the Hall, Arturo Gatti will be someday, too, while Holman Williams, by all accounts a scientific marvel but not an especially exciting one, is not. So take the compliment.

The other reason Whitaker's induction is noteworthy and speaks well of the fight community is it shows a preference for quality not just over flash, but also over likeability. Whitaker has been viewed, mostly later in his career, as rather a prickly little bastard, concerned to a far greater degree with whether or not he was respected than whether he was perceived as particularly cuddly. He craved respect, not adoration (not that this is a bad thing). And somewhat like Bernard Hopkins and a few others, he saw himself as a vastly under-appreciated figure, despite his long-standing reputation as one of the best fighters on the planet.

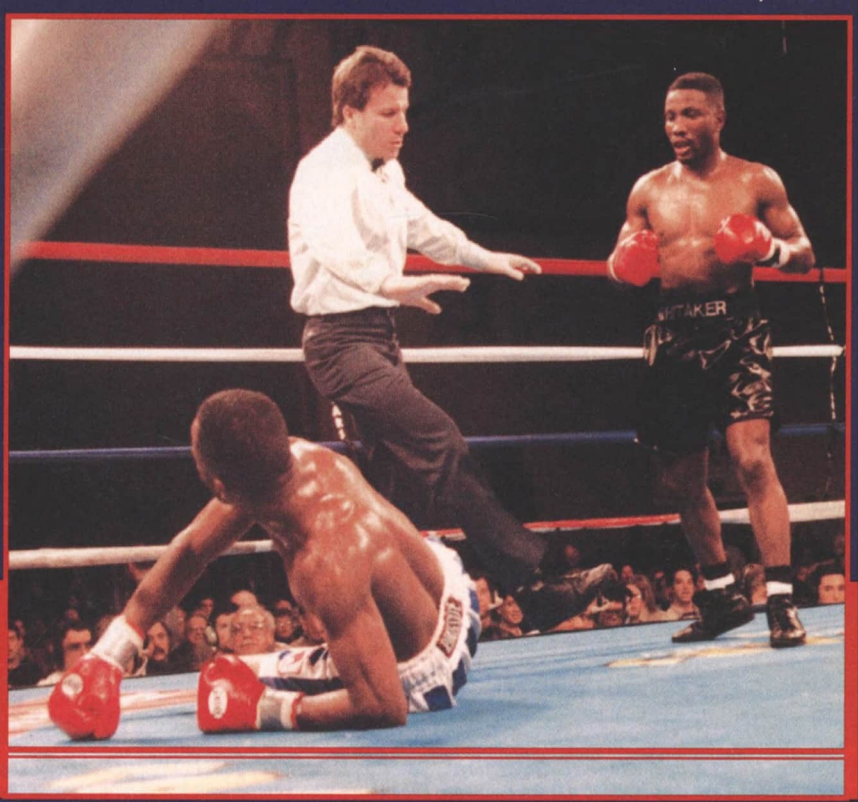
"Maybe I was just too good," he told HBO last year. "I don't think I ever walked into a ring where I was favored to win. The odds were always against me. I always made it look easy and they couldn't take it." Whitaker was talking about the times close decisions went against him, but his assertion that he was always the underdog is not even close to being factual. Though many picked him to lose to Chavez, McGirt, and De La Hoya, for the great majority of his fights he was a prohibitive favorite.

D 12 Julio Cesar Chavez, September 12, 1993: It is true that Chavez was above his best weight and past his best days by this point, but the guy was 88-0, folks. He was viewed damn near unanimously as the best fighter in the world and, by the end of this fight, anyone who had their eyes open knew Whitaker had whipped him. The scores, 115-113 Whitaker and 115-115 (twice), were viewed nearly universally as indefensible.

W 12 Buddy McGirt, October 1, 1994: This was the fight McGirt wanted, the one he begged for after the first match, when two of the judges had him down by just a combined three points at the end (the other one had Whitaker up by six). So after some nasty campaigning, aided by McGirt's claim that he'd do much better with a healthy shoulder, Whitaker gave him what he asked for and administered a thorough shellacking, winning by scores of 117-110, 117-113, and 118-112.

KO 11 Diosbelys Hurtado, January 24, 1997: Even great cuties like Whitaker have to dig deep eventually. Whitaker was down in the first and sixth rounds and trailing on all cards when he trapped Hurtado on the ropes and assailed him with everything he had left. Referee Arthur Mercante Jr. stopped it after Hurtado, who was caught up in the ropes, took 11 clean, unanswered headshots. In a sense, it was Whitaker's finest moment.

Whitaker came off the floor to stop Hurtado



Still, it was hard to blame him for what seemed bitterness. He suffered through two of the more controversial decisions of his era—the loss to Jose Luis Ramirez in their first fight and the draw with Chavez. And the margin by which the judges said De La Hoya outpointed him in their meeting in April '97 must still rankle.

After dropping the decision to De La Hoya by the absurdly lopsided scores of 115-111 and 116-110 (twice), Whitaker told the press, "If Oscar had really beaten me, I would be the first to say he is the best fighter in the world. But when I wake up tomorrow, I'll still be the best fighter in the world. I'm not here to cry over spilled milk. I'm not here to whine. But that was the Pernell Whitaker of old, whether you like it or not. I told you I was going to give you a great performance and I gave it."

Whitaker went on the try to convince the press he'd won 10 of the 12 rounds (another absurd proposition). "That kid almost was asking me to knock him out. But I wouldn't. I said I wasn't going to knock him out. I wanted to punish him."

PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

Almost forgotten among his long list of accomplishments was Whitaker's 1995 decision over Julio Cesar Vasquez to win the WBA junior middleweight title. "Sweet Pea" never bothered to defend the title, and instead dropped back down to welterweight.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Whitaker slams a right into Oscar De La Hoya's handsome face during their 1997 bout in Las Vegas. Many people, including Whitaker, thought that "The Golden Boy" was lucky to get the decision. Even those who agreed with the verdict thought the margin was too wide.

It was a tone Whitaker had been cultivating over the last several years: defiant, arrogant, and not the playful arrogance of Muhammad Ali or Naseem Hamed, but a vaguely mean-spirited type that didn't exist as clearly earlier in his career, at least outside the ring. Then, he would occasionally praise a vanquished opponent. During his fight with Nelson he taunted and made light of him, which seemed unnecessary and in bad taste, as Nelson was already past his best days and moving up in weight. But afterward, Whitaker joked, "He hit me so hard one time I think I saw my two sons. And they weren't even at the fight."

You can blame it maybe on the clear fact that he never lost a fight decisively until Felix Trinidad did it in '99 when he floored Whitaker, broke his jaw, and won by decision. But Whitaker was 35 years old by then, with a career behind him already that showed a couple of losses and a draw he never bought into, was embarrassed by, and didn't believe in.

It cannot be easy for Whitaker now, with his problems with the law well-documented, but now in the past. He's training fighters, but one can only imagine what it must be like to try to impart the genius he had to a someone of far lesser skill. It must be akin to trying to teach a dog to paint. Ted Williams, it is said, was a terrible batting coach because he never could understand why it didn't come as easy for everyone else as it did for him. So it must be with Whitaker.

He should take comfort in the knowledge that he is regarded as one of the all-time great lightweights, up there with Roberto Duran and Joe Gans and Benny Leonard. He should know that he will be received well in the Hall, and that he belongs there. And that when his induction is greeted with applause, it will be because he did good work. ■

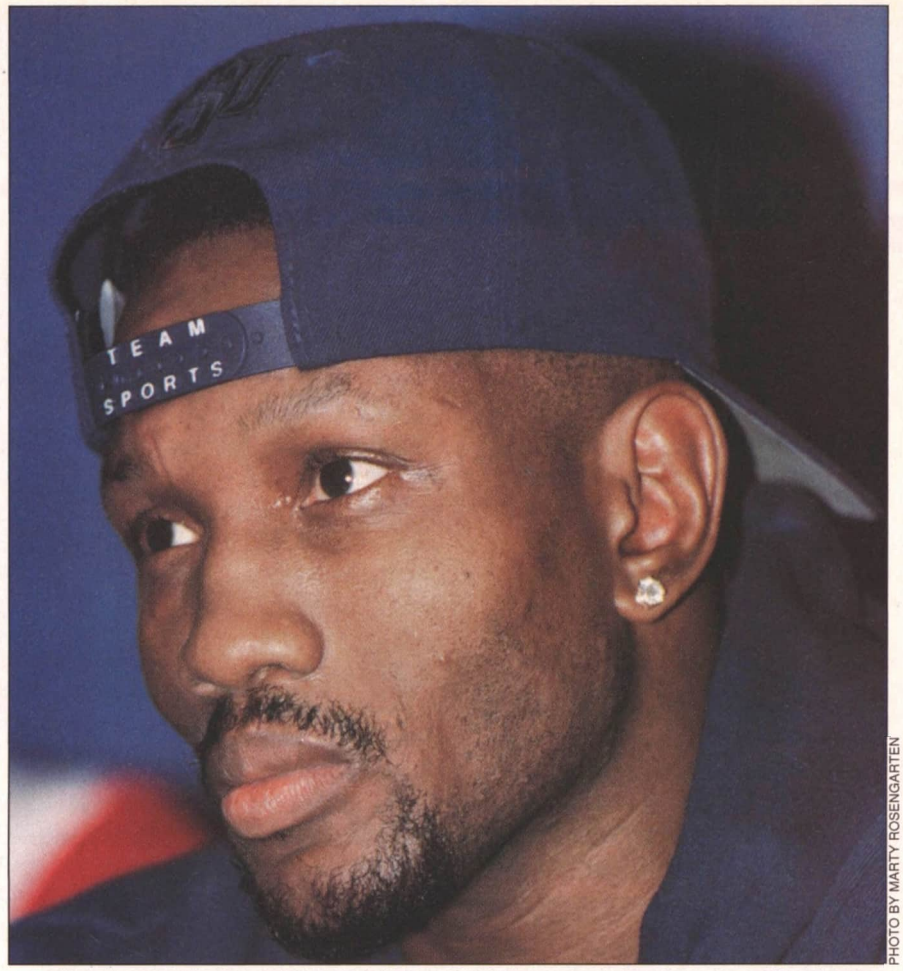


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Despite his success, Whitaker wasn't the happiest of fighters or the most pleasant to be around. This tendency became more and more pronounced the last third of his career.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Autograph hunters besieged Whitaker when he visited the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2000. This June he will be returning to Canastota, New York, as an inductee. Despite his boring style and sour personality, Sweet Pea is recognized as an all-time great.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Tony Thompson W 10 Timor Ibragimov
Alonzo Butler W 10 James Walton
Michael Sprott KO 3 Audley Harrison
Juan Carlos Gomez KO 1
Adenilson Rodrigues
David Cadieux W 10 Ross Puritty
Tye Fields W 10 Kendrick Releford
Carl Davis Drumond KO 5
Walter Palacios
Eddie Chambers KO 7 Derrick Rossy
Chris Arreola KO 3 Zakeem Graham
Joey Abell KO 3 Cornelius Ellis
Bruce Seldon KO 1 Marcus Rhode
Bermane Stiverne KO 1 Harold Sconiers
Dominick Guinn KO 2 Zuri Lawrence
Chazz Witherspoon KO 2 Patrick Smith
Steffen Kretschmann KO 2
Marek Oravsky
Serdar Sahin W 8 Sven Haselhuhn

Cruiserweights

Wayne Braithwaite KO 7
Gustavo Enriquez
Jonathon Banks W 8 Zack Page

Light Heavyweights

Chad Dawson W 12 Tomasz Adamek
(*Wins WBC Title*)
Paul Briggs W 12 Rupert van Aswegen
Esteban Camou KO 2
Ricardo Campillo
Adonis Stevenson KO 1
Etienne Whitaker
Kai Kurzawa W 8
Riccardo Grassmann
Otis Griffin W 8 Marcus Pernell
Max Alexander W 8 Marty Lindquist

Super Middleweights

Sakio Bika W 12 Andre Thysse

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY

Heavyweight Michael Sprott drops Audley Harrison

Laila Ali KO 1 Gwendolyn O'Neil
Andre Dirrell W 8 Kenny Kost
Steven McGuire KO 1 Roman Vanicky
Roger Cantrell KO 6 Robert Marthaller
Kazuyoshi Morihiro KO 3 Kazuo Maki

Middleweights

Amin Asikainen W 12
Lorenzo Di Giacomo
Sebastian Zbik W 12 Fawaz Nasir
Prince Arron W 8 George Katsimpas
James McGirt Jr. KO 4 Anthony Little
Gee Edward Cullmer W 6 Daniel Hicks

Junior Middleweights

Cory Spinks W 12 Rodney Jones
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Verno Phillips W 10 Eduardo Sanchez
Sechew Powell W 10 Ishe Smith
Rev Santillan W 10 Shana Kisaragi
Pawel Wolak KO 4 Luis Hodge
Jose Angel Rodriguez KO 3
Cesar Valentin
Allen Conyers KO 2 Derek Ennis
Ossie Duran W 8 Jonathan Reid

Welterweights

Shane Mosley W 12 Luis Collazo
Jan Zaveck W 12 Nicolas Guisset
Ali Nuumbembe W 12 Kevin Anderson
Andre Berto KO 1 Norberto Bravo
Taisei Marumoto KO 9
Yoshinori Takenaka
Motoki Sasaki KO 5 Aswin Cabuy
Gabriel Martinez W 8
Roberto Valenzuela
Eamonn Magee W 6 Janos Petrovics
Jose Arosemena D 10 Jordan Sanchez

Junior Welterweights

Junior Witter KO 9 Arturo Morua
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Vivian Harris W 12 Juan Lazcano
Paul Malignaggi W 10 Edner Cherry
David Torres W 10 Robert Frankel
Fernando Montilla W 10
Arniel Tinampay
Norihito Nakamura W 8
Mitsuyuki Komori
Josafat Perez KO 7 Osvaldo Lara

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Lightweight Michael Katsidis nails Graham Earl with a right uppercut

Hiroshi Nakamori KO 7
Yosukezan Onodera
Sergey Sorokin KO 7 Michael Muya
Kenryo Matsumoto KO 4
Malfah Looksaikondeen
Oscar Medina KO 1 Ivan Taberna
Tsukasa Takase W 6 Hiroki Hayama

Lightweights

Julio Diaz KO 3 Jesus Chavez
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Rocky Juarez KO 5 Emmanuel Lucero
Michael Katsidis KO 5 Graham Earl
Carl Johanneson W 12 Ricky Burns
Billy Dib W 10 Carlos Contreras
Amir Khan KO 1 Mohammed Medjadji
Sergio Rivera KO 8 Miguel Lopez
Pipino Cuevas Jr. KO 2
Guadalupe Arce
Humberto Gutierrez KO 2
Manuel Cruz
Ricardo Mijares KO 1 Levi Perez
Gerardo Mijares KO 1 Carlos Urias
Akiomi Tazaki KO 1 Ryu Shingaki
Jaime Clampitt W 10 Mia St. John
Ricardo Medina W 6 Lenny DeVictoria

Junior Lightweights

Takashi Uchiyama W 10
Muangfahlek Kiatwichean
Dario Lombardo W 8
Hector Cisneros
Hiroyasu Matsuzaki W 8
Tsubasa Shiono
Junichiro Kaneda W 8
Ngaoprajan Sithsaithong
Diego Dapas KO 1 Ignacio Ochoa

Featherweights

Hiroyuki Enoki KO 6
Kularbdang Kiatkrerin
Ryan Barrett W 10 Jamie McKeever
Damian Marchiano W 10
Diego Hernandez
Yuta Nagai W 10 Yasuo Kijima
Futa Nakagishi KO 5 Vihok Jockygym
Paul Appleby W 8 Buster Dennis
Victor Jose Terrazas KO 4 Jose Caro
Kenshi Kinoshita KO 2
Tetsuya Kimura
Hiroki Toyokawa W 6 Hitoshi Itokazu
Nelson Lara W 6 Fredy Blandon

Junior Featherweights

Mike Oliver W 12 Gary Stark Jr.
Alejandro Valdez KO 3
Jorge Cardenas
Kazuma Miura W 8 Kenichi Saito
Kazunori Takayama W 8
Tomoyuki Kubota
Naoki Nishiyama KO 1
Masaki Nagasawa
Yuji Hattori W 6 Shunsuke Sato

Bantamweights

Samingnum Wor Wiwatananon W 10
Kazuhiro Matsuda

Junior Bantamweights

Kohei Kono W 10 Teppei Kikui
Noriyuki Komatsu KO 8
Wanmeechok Singwangcha
Luis Maldonado KO 4 Jorge Romero
Daigo Nakahiro KO 4
Masayuki Arinaga
Akitoshi Oyamada W 6
Shigeki Hanawa

Flyweights

Alejandro Hernandez W 12
Jonathan Perez
Celso Danggod W 10
Acasio Simbajon
Jung Oh Son KO 3
Jae Sung Myung
Juan Esquer KO 2
Fred Heberto Valdez
Yoshihiro Kinjo KO 2 Ryo Suzuki
Ryo Miyazaki KO 1
Suanruang Sorthanapinyo

Junior Flyweights

Ulises Solis KO 8 Will Grigsby
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Goro Tachibana W 10
Naoya Kishida
Kenichi Horikawa W 10
Masaki Yamawaki

Strawweights

Ji Hyun Park W 10 Tian Yi Lin

Julio Diaz KO 3 Jesus Chavez

Kissimmee, Florida: If there's an unluckier fighter in the game right now than Chavez, we don't know about him. In the past three years, "El Matador" suffered shoulder injuries against Erik Morales that required a 15-month recuperation period, scored a fatal knockout over Leavander Johnson, and lost out on a payday against Marco Antonio Barrera due to training injuries. By the time he got into the ring at Silver Spurs Arena to defend the IBF lightweight title against "interim" titlist Diaz, Chavez hadn't fought in 17 months. And he barely got an opportunity to fight Diaz before his body betrayed him.

Mere seconds into the third round, Chavez, whose right knee was in a brace, slipped ever so slightly on a painted logo on the canvas and injured the right knee, collapsing to the floor. Referee Frank Santore Jr. (USA) counted him out at 0:22 of the round.

By all appearances, it wasn't going to be Chavez' night anyway. Diaz, 135, Coachella, California, dominated the first two rounds by keeping the action in the center of the ring, where his length and superior jab were put to excellent use. When he jabbed, there was little that Chavez, 134¾, Austin, Texas, could do. When he didn't jab and Chavez took the lead, Diaz, 27, strafed him with excellent counter left hooks.

In the second round, Diaz did fine work with one-two combinations, while Chavez lunged ineffectively, failing to get into punching range. The closest Chavez came to winning a point was when Diaz was warned for a low blow late in the second round.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Chavez is counted out after his knee caved

Television: **Showtime**

Promoter: **Don King Productions, Sycuan Ringside Promotions**

(2-3-07)

Cory Spinks W 12 Rodney Jones

Kissimmee, Florida: Not only do the big shots at Showtime deserve credit for investing in numerous quality matchups over the past few years, but they also deserve credit for knowing when not to pay a penny for a fight. Such was the case with the dreadful Spinks-Jones fight on the Chad Dawson-Tomasz Adamek undercard at Silver Spurs Arena. It had stinker written all over it and Showtime passed, which proved to be a wise move because the fight was every bit as unwatchable as experts expected the matchup of defensive-minded southpaws to be.

There's no point reviewing the fight's memorable moments ... because there weren't any. Making his first defense of the IBF junior middleweight belt that he won via close decision over Roman Karmazin, the 28-year-old Spinks, 153¾, St. Louis, Missouri, controlled just about every round, while Jones, 153, Stockton, California, was utterly ineffective throughout. There was a decided lack of drama, and a painful surplus of mauling, hugging, running, and slapping. And along with that came plenty of booing.

The 38-year-old Jones, who failed in a WBO title shot against Harry Simon in 2000, didn't fight with the hunger of a veteran getting his final crack, but one has to presume that this was indeed his last chance. Judge Pat Russell (USA) was kind enough to give him two rounds in scoring the fight 118-109, while judges Adelaide Byrd (USA) and Billy Ray (USA) both had it a shutout at 120-108.

"He was a long, rangy guy, so I had to outsmart him," said Spinks. 36-3 (11), said. "I used my athletic talent and smarts to win."

"I wanted to fight more, but he ran away a lot and I tried to track him down," explained Jones, 37-4-1 (22). "I was frustrated with the style, but a person is going to do what they feel they have to do to win the fight."

Promoter: **Don King Productions**

(2-3-07)

Nicolay Valuev KO 3 Jameel McCline

Basel, Switzerland: All things are relative. When promoter Wilfried Sauerland boasted of this being "the biggest heavy-

weight championship of all-time," he was not suggesting a historic rival to the Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier trilogy or the rematch between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. At least, we hope not. What distinguished the first ever heavyweight title bout to be held on Swiss soil was the combined size of 7'2" Valuev, 322¼, St. Petersburg, Russia, and 6'6" "Big Time" McCline, 268¼, West Palm Beach, Florida, via Harlem, New York, a title-fight record in terms of both weight and height. By most other measures it disappointed, particularly in its anti-climax, forced by McCline suffering a knee injury that prevented him from continuing at the end of the third round. The fans at St. Jakob Halle were quick to realize that they had not witnessed a classic.

The torn tendons in McCline's left knee, which popped out as he threw and missed a left hook-right hand combination just as the bell rang to end round three, would subsequently require surgery. McCline, 36, collapsed onto the canvas and required assistance to get himself back up. The referee, John Coyle (England), had rightly waved his hands, signaling that the fight was over, and all that was left for the challenger for the WBA heavyweight title was an explanation of how his own punches had knocked him out (another heavyweight first?).

"I didn't have a knee problem going into the ring. It just went out at the end of the third round and there was nothing I could do," explained McCline, 38-7-3 (23). "I feel so bad about it because I had him figured out and I was going to go on and win the fight. I was hitting him in close with combinations to the body and getting out again without getting hit. Everything I had trained to do was coming off. Then a freak injury happened and what could I do?"

In truth, McCline's flurries were having no discernible effect on Valuev, 33,whose ramrod jab and heavy overhand rights were the most dominating factors in the brief action. Valuev, 46-0 (34) with 1 no-contest, commanded the ring and McCline circled its periphery with little real success. When he landed a sharp left hook to the jaw in the second round, he was immediately countered with a right hand on the chin. This was the third time for McCline to challenge for an alphabet belt, having previously been stopped by Wladimir Klitschko for the WBO title before dropping a split decision to Chris Byrd for the IBF strap.

[The Ring Fighter of the Month] Presented by EVERLAST

Chad Dawson

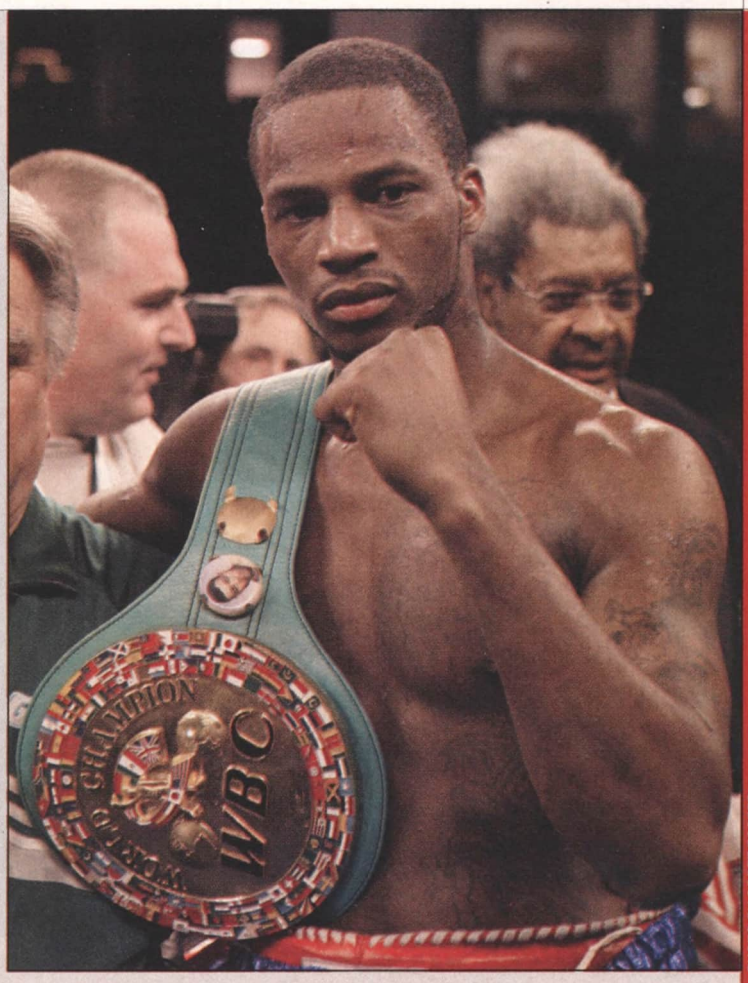


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

Most people say boxing is a young man's game. But the light heavyweight division is an old man's division, with The Ring champion and eight of his top nine contenders all 30 years of age or older—in the case of some, *much* older. The exception is Chad Dawson, who's still young enough to get charged a little extra to rent a car.

Regardless of the trend in the division, on February 3 in Kissimmee, Florida, boxing was indeed the young man's game, as the 24-year-old Dawson marked himself as the future—and, to an extent, the present—of the 175-pound weight class with an eye-opening victory over the older, more experienced Tomasz Adamek. Dawson hadn't faced many real tests prior: Carl Daniels was undersized and over the hill, Ian Gardner was featherfisted, and Eric Harding, by far the best of "Bad Chad's" opponents, was about five years past his true prime. But Dawson was ready for Adamek. And Adamek was not ready at all for the speed and weaponry of Dawson.

Aside from a late scare—a knockdown in round 10 that Dawson confidently shook off—it was a completely one-sided fight, which was the one outcome virtually no one foresaw. Dawson beating Adamek was not necessarily a shock. Dawson dominating Adamek was. It was a performance few realized the Connecticut southpaw was capable of. And it was a performance unequalled by any other fighter this month.

But there was no real conviction in McCline's work. If he was going to wrest the title out of Valuev's giant grasp, he would have needed to do much more.

He enjoyed some success in the third when he landed a left hook and a right hand around the large head of the Russian, followed by another right hand. He also rattled off another left-right-left combination, but it did not knock Valuev out of his stride. He continued to stalk and traded blows with McCline toward the end of round three before the American's sudden collapse at the bell. "For a heavyweight who weighs more than 270 pounds, it is vital to keep the balance all the time," said Valuev, who should know a thing or two about this requirement. "Jameel wasn't in a stable position at that moment. But it could have been a much worse ending for Jameel. I had found my rhythm and felt very comfortable. I would have knocked him out in the sixth or seventh round."

Promoter Don King, who has a stake in Valuev, put another spin on it. "Nico has the hardest punch I have ever seen," King announced. "He knocked out McCline with his kneecap-busting punch. He hits so hard. He will unify the division and win all four belts." King held back from comparing him to Ali or George Foreman, but only just. There was no need to talk up "the biggest heavyweight championship of all-time" anymore.

Promoter: **Sauerland Events,** in association with **Don King Productions**

(1-20-07)

Brian Doogan

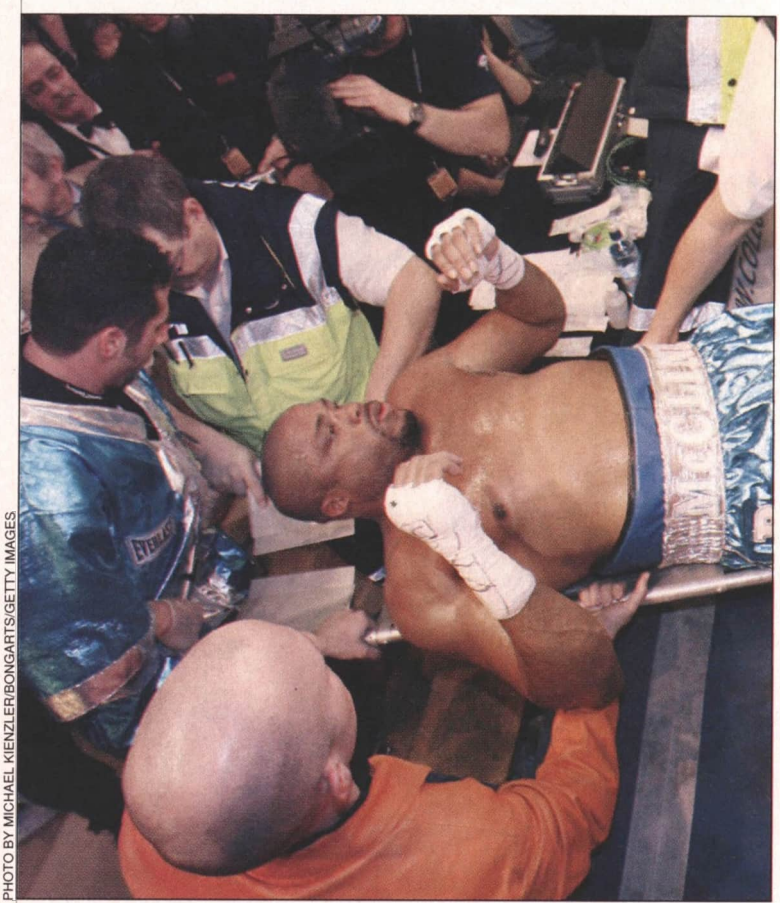


PHOTO BY MICHAEL KIENZLER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

McCline is taken from the ring on a stretcher

Jorge Arce W 12 Julio Roque Ler

Anaheim, California: Even against an overmatched, unwilling opponent, consummate entertainer Arce still put on a decent show in dominating Ler. The former junior flyweight beltholder rode a dancing horse to the ring for his second fight at junior bantamweight. Like the horse, Ler was content to let Arce dictate the action.

Fighting outside of his native Argentina for the first time, Ler backed into the ropes after eating a few solid shots early in an apparent imitation of Muhammad Ali's fight plan in Zaire. But the energetic Arce, 114½, Los Mochis, Mexico, never broke down. He threw 866 punches over 12 rounds and looked as if he could go at least another 10.

Ler, 114¾, certainly didn't do much to wear him out. He averaged just 29 shots thrown per round and spent the first four doing as much talking and covering up as he did fighting. When Ler, 26, came out of his shell, though, he landed the cleaner shots. The 27-year-old Arce, who gained 15 pounds after the weigh-in, had most of his success to the body, which likely drained some power from Ler's counters.

Ler landed just 17 punches through the first four rounds before opening up a bit in the fifth and sixth. He planted a kiss on Arce's cheek in the seventh and taunted the Mexican to keep throwing punches. Arce continued to throw combo after combo against Ler's arms and gloves, dance for the 7,091 on hand at the Honda Center, and verbally plead with Ler to fight.

After Arce, 46-3-1 (35), returned Ler's kiss in the ninth, Ler, 23-2 (14), connected with a pair of combos in some of the best action of the fight. In the 11th, Ler missed badly with a punch, and Arce mimicked a bullfighter as he stepped away. Arce then landed his best shot of the night, a hard left hook to the head that nearly floored Ler. While Arce flurried in pursuit of the knockout, Ler seemed to fake injury after being hit on the hip, and referee Jose Cobian (USA) gave him precious time to recover. Ler spent most of the 12th in survival mode.

"He didn't come to fight. He came to say he went the distance with Jorge Arce," said Arce, who'd predicted a knockout within eight rounds. Judges Chuck Hassett (USA) and Fritz Warner (USA) scored it 117-110, while Duane Ford (USA) had it 117-109, all for Arce. THE RING saw it 119-109 for Arce, who won his 26th straight fight but saw an eight-bout kayo streak end.

The bout was for the WBC's mandatory position at junior bantamweight, and as of press time, Arce appeared headed toward a date with WBC beltholder Cristian Mijares on the April undercard of Manny Pacquiao-Jorge Solis in San Antonio.

Television: **HBO**

Promoter: **Top Rank**

(1-27-07)

Zsolt Erdei KO 8 Danny Santiago

Dusseldorf, Germany: There is no doubt that Erdei, 173, Budapest, Hungary, is one of the top practitioners at light heavyweight, but as long as he continues to operate in Germany, he will have little chance to prove himself against the marquee names in his division. Bernard Hopkins, THE RING light heavyweight champion, is never going to put his belt on the line on foreign turf, and England's Clinton Woods, the IBF titleholder, is looking for an American opponent and hoping to secure a match with Antonio Tarver. So Erdei is left with opponents like Santiago, 1741/2, Ocala, Florida, an honest pro out of his depth, which was apparent long before Erdei stopped him in the eighth round at Burgwachter Costello to retain the WBO belt for the seventh time.

"I would like to fight a big name in the U.S. next or a unification fight," said Erdei, 26-0 (16). "But if I keep my title for another two or three years, that would be okay too."

Alas, he will probably have to settle for the latter. Santiago, 29-3-1 (19), was ranked number 14 by the WBO and he was no test for a crafty boxer with fast hands whose pedigree was established in the 2000 Olympics when he won a bronze medal to add to gold medals in the European championships and world amateur championships. Just about the only entry of note on Santiago's record was a fourth-round stoppage of Elvir Muriqi in 2004 when "The Kosovo Kid" was a prospect. "I'm going into enemy territory because a shot like this doesn't come along every day," he said, though it would turn out to be a dubious privilege.

Santiago was assertive in the opening round, but from the moment he was floored by a powerful left hook 20 seconds into round two, it became a matter of how long he would be able to survive. Erdei dominated behind his jab and threw an overwhelming array of punches. Santiago was brave but hopelessly outgunned.

Midway through the eighth round, Erdei, 32, floored Santiago, 33, with a right hand and the American fell on his back. Courageously, he beat the count of American referee Genaro Rodriguez, but Erdei followed up with another hard right that staggered Santiago and the referee wisely waved the bout over at the 1:55 mark.

"All I can do is keep winning and leave others to judge me on my performances," said Erdei.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**

(1-27-07)

Brian Doogan

Ulises Solis KO 8 Will Grigsby

Las Vegas, Nevada: When these two junior flyweights fought in January 2006, Solis claimed an easy points win. A rematch seemed quite unnecessary, but it was made nevertheless, and a year later at the Orleans Arena, Solis looked even sharper as he picked punches accurately each round before becoming the first to stop Grigsby, at the end of the eighth round. And not only is Solis the only man to kayo the two-time former IBF 108-pound titlist, but he's in excellent company among the men who've beaten Grigsby in his 18-4-1 (7) career, joining Hall of Famers Michael Carbajal and Ricardo Lopez.

Solis, 107, Guadalajara, Mexico, started off as the aggressor, using his quick left jabs to set up his straight right hands, which were landing cleanly on Grigsby's head. Grigsby, 108, St. Paul, Minnesota, was moving but not throwing or many landing shots. He was trying to get inside Solis' jab, but he got caught with overhand rights almost each time he moved in close.

In the fourth round, Solis, 25, hurt Grigsby, 36, with hooks to the body. Grigsby hadn't fought since his loss to Solis a year earlier, and his rust (and age) showed. His timing looked like it was a little off. He was backing off with no reply to the punches Solis was dealing out.

Solis was totally in control and his use of feints before punches seemed to confuse Grigsby. By the sixth round, Solis was landing an accurate overhand right to his opponent's face that caused Grisgby's eye to start to swell up.

Solis, 23-1-2 (17), was peppering Grigsby repeatedly with left jabs that he couldn't seem to get away from. Solis, who was making his third defense of the IBF strap he took from Grigsby, continued to hit the challenger at will, and in the eighth round he landed a solid double left hook to the body, causing the referee, Jay Nady (USA), to stay close in case he needed to stop the fight.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Erdei disposes of Santiago in the eighth round

Instead, Grigsby's corner pulled their man out in between rounds. It was the right thing to do, as the once-formidable American simply had no hope of turning the fight around. A couple of weeks later, the Nevada Athletic Commission revealed that Grigsby had tested positive for marijuana, so even if he had won, he wouldn't have gotten the victory. It was a poor showing all the way around for the former titleholder—but a good nationally televised advertisement for Solis' abilities.

Television: **Versus**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(1-25-07)
Wayne McCullough

Almazbek Raiymkulov W 10 Emanuel Augustus

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Many of boxing's wise old men will tell you that losing is often the best thing that can happen to a fighter, that if he hasn't lost before his big title fight comes, he probably isn't ready for it. Some fighters who've made it a long way before losing for the first time—Floyd Mayweather, Julio Cesar Chavez, Muhammad Ali, etc.—would probably be quick to argue that point. But for "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov, the statement appears to be ringing true. He's come back stronger since an embarrassing upset loss to Nate Campbell in October '05, and his win over the clever and battle-tested Augustus at the New Alhambra was probably the most complete and impressive performance of the Las Vegas-based Kyrgyz fighter's career.

Those looking for excuses for Augustus will be quick to point out that he took the fight on two days notice when original opponent Antonio Pitalua ran into visa problems, but Augustus has taken numerous fights on similarly short notice before, and he's almost always more competitive than he was against Kid Diamond. Put simply, Augustus, 137, Chicago, Illinois, wasn't competitive in the least on this night. He was outclassed in every way, suffered a rare knockdown, and hardly threw any punches. Raiymkulov, 137, was on top of him throughout and never let the 32-year-old veteran get going. He never even gave Augustus an opportunity to engage in any of his trademark clowning.

Ex-Olympian Raiymkulov, 29, plowed forward confidently, using his jab to set up thudding powerpunches. Augustus seemed to sense early on that he wasn't going to be able to hold off the younger, stronger man, and his main purpose became using his guile to avoid getting knocked out.

The veteran, fighting in his 68th bout, nearly suffered that unfortunate fate in the ninth round despite his determination. With his nose bloodied, he absorbed a hail of heavy-handed punches, and took a knee until referee Gary Rosato (USA) reached the count of nine. Kid Diamond, 24-1-1 (14), pounced on his wounded foe, but the defensive instincts of Augustus, 34-28-6 (18), kicked in, and he rolled with enough of the punches to survive. He fought back admirably in the 10th round, but when the final bell rang, he was clearly a shutout loser.

Judges Bernard Bruni (USA) and Dave Greer (USA) both scored it 100-89 for Raiymkulov, while Robert Grasso (USA) found a round to give to Augustus, ending up with a tally of 99-90.

Though many wrote him off after the loss to Campbell, Kid Diamond has obviously rebuilt his confidence and improved his game. The win made him THE RING's number-five contender in the lightweight division, and considering he has a draw against champion Joel Casamayor on his record, he has to be considered a true threat to anyone in the weight class.

Television: **Versus**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(1-11-07)

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Raiymkulov dominates Augustus for easy win

Junior Witter KO 9 Arturo Morua

London, England: If Witter, 139¾, Bradford, England, was hoping to make a compelling statement, he could have been more impressive before he finally dispensed with Morua, 139¾, Guadalajara, Mexico, in the ninth round at Alexandra Palace. Still, he called out THE RING junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton afterward and argued that there is no good reason why an encounter between the two British beltholders should not be made.

It would appear, however, that Witter is simply not on Hatton's radar. By winning and now once defending the WBC 140-pound title, the 32-year-old product of Brendan Ingle's gym in Sheffield is doing all that he has to do, but his goading of Hatton is having the opposite

PHOTO BY PAUL GILHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Witter batters Morua in defense of 140-pound WBC belt

effect to what he would desire. "If we are not careful, we're going to miss a wonderful opportunity to make this happen, a fight which would capture the public imagination in Britain," said Witter. "I would go to his backyard and fight him at Manchester City's stadium, I wouldn't have a problem with that." His problem is that Hatton's focus is on conquering America and next up will be Jose Luis Castillo in June at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. No matter what Witter does, it is just not compelling enough for Hatton.

In his first defense of the vacant belt he claimed against DeMarcus Corley, Witter, 35-1-2 (20), began in circumspect fashion in an attempt to figure out the subdued Mexican's game plan. He stepped up his efforts in the second and fired a hard left into the side of Morua's face. The 28-year-old Mexican, who holds a points win over ex-WBA titleholder Carlos Maussa, was interested only in counterpunching and, although he clipped Witter with a left, he had neither the knowledge nor adaptability to do damage to the Englishman this way. Witter kept up the heat in the third round and appeared to have Morua, 24-8-1 (13), hurt along the ropes. He was cut, albeit slightly, over his left eye in the fourth round and Witter opened up in the fifth with a series of fast and powerful combinations, but the challenger managed to cover up and survive. Survival was his objective for the fight.

Finally, in the ninth, Witter got through with a series of damaging blows after nailing Morua with a left uppercut to the jaw early. The ropes and a corner post helped to keep the Mexican on his feet, and American referee Tim Adams intervened to administer a count. When Witter followed up with a sustained salvo, this was all that the third man needed to bring a halt to the one-sided affair at the 2:12 mark.

"Junior did the job he had to do and it's over to Hatton and his people," said Ingle. "It seems to me to be a natural fight to make, but I'm not hearing much to encourage me from their camp."

Promoter: **Mick Hennessy**
(1-20-07)
Brian Doogan

Cornelius Bundrage W 10 Chris Smith

Tacoma, Washington: Being on *The Contender* can get a fighter exposure, but the fighter then has to be talented enough to take that exposure and compound it with pugilistic success. By all appearances, "K9" Bundrage, arguably the biggest star to emerge from the second season of the boxing-themed reality show, is only a modest talent, and in his first fight since graduating from *The Contender*, he just barely survived against fading fringe contender Smith. Bundrage was nearly out on his feet in both the sixth and 10th rounds, but he showed heart and poise to make it to the final bell with enough points piled up to get the split decision win.

Bundrage, 149, Detroit, Michigan, controlled the first two rounds with his left jab, and when the fight was fought at range, there wasn't a whole lot Smith, 148, Queens, New York, could do. In the third, Smith started to get into the fight, landing enough big right hands to keep Bundrage honest. Bundrage continued winning rounds by boxing smart, but Smith, who appeared to be the harder puncher, was stalking effectively in spots.

In the fifth, Bundrage suffered a cut over the right eye that referee Paul Field (USA) ruled to be the result of a punch. And it got much worse for K9 in the sixth, when Smith, 31, got through with that dangerous right hand and had the 33-year-old wobbling all over the ring, trying to cling to Smith to smother his attack.

But Bundrage cleared his head and got back to boxing and moving, the right strategy for him, even if the crowd at the Emerald Queen Casino didn't approve. His jab again helped him pile up points—until Smith scored with another right hand in the 10th and final round and had Bundrage, 25-2 (14), in bad shape again. Impressively, K9 dug in and righted himself, and even appeared to stun Smith, 20-4-1 (13), with a left hook just before the end of the fight.

Judge Alan Krebs (USA) saw the fight 96-94 for Smith, but he was overruled by Tom McDonough (USA) and Barry Druxman (USA), who had it 96-94 and 97-93, respectively, for Bundrage. THE RING scored it 95-94 for Bundrage.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Brian Halquist Productions**
(1-12-07) ■

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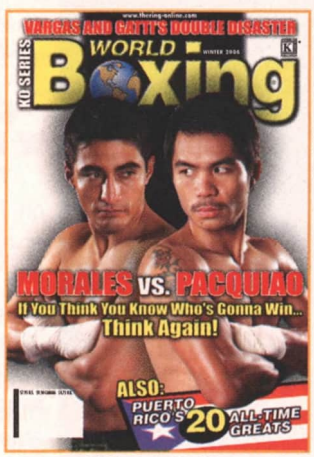

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passion. Always big for his size, Stiverne played linebacker in high school and continued playing when the family moved to Montreal, Canada, when he was in his late-teens.

"I started in karate, because my father was a kickboxing world champion and I tried to follow in his steps," Stiverne said. "But karate really didn't work. I just stopped when I was around 15. I always played football. That was going to be it for me. I wanted to play in the United States."

Stiverne chased that dream all the way up until college, when he injured his left knee in a game. The injury never required surgery, but it limited his range of motion and ended any thoughts of one day playing in the National Football League.

The youngest of five boys among 14 children on his father's side and the oldest of his mother's four children, Stiverne took up boxing relatively late. But there was a reason for that: After suffering the football injury, he could have rented himself out as a blimp. He exploded from 180 pounds to 270. The setback not only took football away, it led to a sedentary lifestyle, a time in which he wasn't too happy with himself.

"I was a different person," Stiverne recalled. "I just kept going to school and studying, but I was always mad too. I realized that this was it. My football career was over. So all I did was eat, eat, eat. It was junk food too. It was a sad time in my life. I was very disappointed because I was the fastest player on my team. I had this dream—and then it was gone. I had a hard time dealing with it. It took me a while."

About a year later, in 1998, he walked into the Olympic Plaza gym in Montreal, where he met boxing trainers Mike Muffa and Dave Campanile. The goal was to lose weight, nothing more.

"I lost 70 pounds in eight months just training and sparring," Stiverne said. "I tried sparring some guys that had 30, 40 fights, and I thought I was doing pretty good for myself. That's what started me boxing. I tried boxing and I liked it."

Muffa and Campanile, now deceased, apparently liked what they saw. Within two months, they had Stiverne competing in amateur bouts. He slowly rose through the Canadian amateur heavyweight ranks and received invites to the 2000 and 2004 Canadian Olympic Trials, each time reaching the semifinal round.

His desire to compete in the Olympics delayed his pro debut, but now, trained by Don House and promoted by Don King, Stiverne is aiming to make '07 his coming-out year.

"Bermane keeps knocking out everyone we put in front of him in the first round," said Bobby Goodman, vice president of boxing operations and public relations for Don King.

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARRDON KING PROMOTIONS

Stiverne made quick work of John Turlington, stopping his overmatched opponent in the first round at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Stiverne has stopped all 10 opponents he's faced, eight coming in the first round.

"He reminds me of a guy like Tony Tubbs. Bermane seems to be boxing very well, but unlike Tubbs, Bermane can punch. Tony couldn't break a grape. I'm inclined to start dropping Bermane in with bottom-line contenders now. I just want to see Bermane get more rounds. It's been tough to find. At this stage, he's one of the bright spots of the heavyweight division."

Stiverne says he doesn't enter fights with the intention of knocking out his opponents. In fact, he says he doesn't know where his power derives from. Regardless, he's much calmer now, more in control when he enters the ring, which is his natural demeanor.

More importantly, B-Ware has a destination.

"I always wanted to be somebody," he said. "I might not be smart enough to be a doctor or a lawyer, but I always wanted to be somebody in sports. By the end of 2007, I want to be ranked in the top 10."

Don't look now, heavyweight division, but the once-nervous, twitchy kid is ready to calmly walk in your direction, and when he gets there, you'd better B-Ware. ■

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October 1950

COVER STORY: "Joe Louis: To Whom Cash And Circumstances Offer Fresh Opportunities" by Daniel M. Daniel previewed Louis' attempt to regain the heavyweight title from Ezzard Charles. "The Brown Bomber" was still the reigning champion when he announced his retirement in 1949, but hadn't fought since knocking out Jersey Joe Walcott in June '48. In the meantime, Charles had won the National Boxing Association version of the title.

Louis was supposedly coming out of retirement for just one fight in order to pay off the $260,000 he owed the IRS. But, as Daniel pointed out, "Louis is now confronted with the necessity of paying off not only the $260,000 which he owes, but the tax on his split of the gate for the Charles fight. This presents what looks like an endless chain. It indicates that, once Louis gets back for 'just one more,' he will find himself under the necessity of continuing, always only one jump ahead of the tax collector."

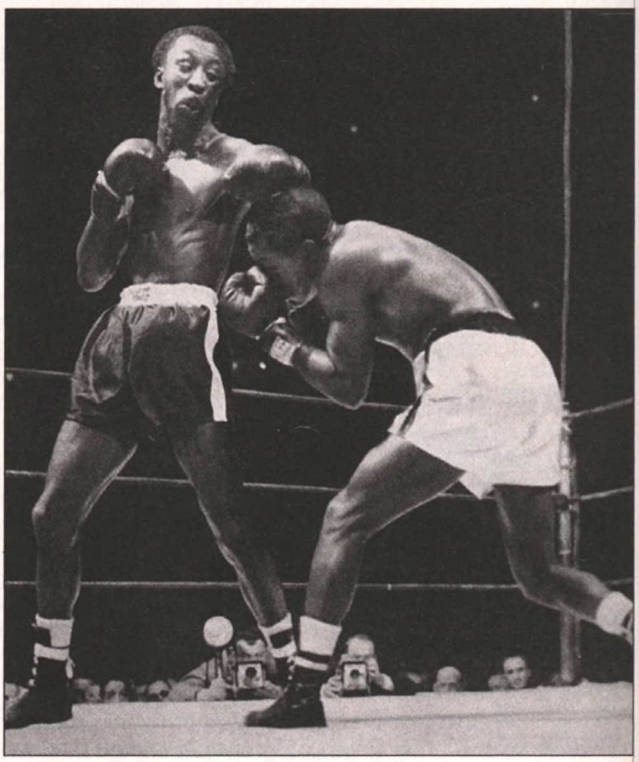
Daniel also delved into the fact that every previous heavyweight champion who tried to regain the title had failed: "Yes, it's a tough job to regain the crown once it has been lost. Did I say tough? Impossible! But who knows? Mr. Louis may have the formula."

As it turned out, Louis did not have the formula, and Charles won a comprehensive 15-round decision when they fought on September 27, 1950. Daniel was also correct about Joe's tax situation. Louis had nine more bouts after Charles, but never did get out from under Uncle Sam's thumb.

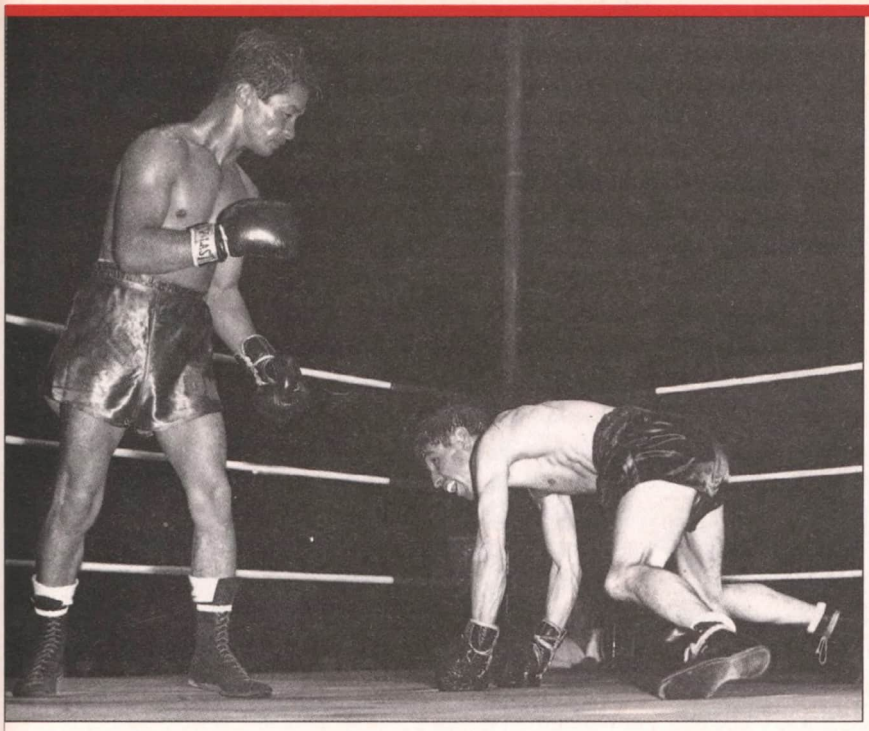
World Champions

(*for the period ended August 15, 1950*)
Heavyweight: vacant
Light Heavyweight: Joey Maxim
Middleweight: Jake LaMotta
Welterweight: Ray Robinson
Lightweight: Ike Williams
Featherweight: Willie Pep
Featherweight: Freddie Miller
Bantamweight: Vic Towell
Flyweight: Dado Marino

"Sugar, Fusari Sweeten Charity" was Nat Fleischer's coverage of Ray Robinson's 15-round decision over Charlie Fusari in defense of the welterweight championship. The fight, promoted by newspaper columnist Walter Winchell, attracted approximately 30,000 fans to Roosevelt



Williams (right) was too small for Costner



Marino floors Allen en route to flyweight title

Stadium in Jersey City, creating a gate of around $150,000, of which $50,000 was donated to the Damon Runyon Cancer Fund. Unfortunately, according to Fleischer, the fans didn't get much of a fight for their money.

"If Robinson had set out deliberately to carry Fusari through 45 minutes of dubious combat, he could not have done a better job," THE RING's publisher wrote.

Oddly enough, even though Fleischer was unsparing in his criticism of the fight, Robinson was named Fighter of the Month.

"Williams Defeat A Sermon" by Al Buck concerned lightweight champion Ike Williams' failed foray into the welterweight division, where he lost a 10-round decision to George "Sugar" Costner.

"Williams never had a chance after Costner rocked him with a terrific left hook in the third round," wrote Buck. "The lightweight champion rallied briefly in the seventh, but by then the verdict was a foregone conclusion."

Buck went on to discus champions from Johnny Kilbane to Billy Conn who tried to move up and conquer a heavier division, only to find that they were out of their depths.

"Marino's Title Triumph Over Allen Is Brilliant" by Ted Yamachika detailed the crowning of Hawaii's first world champion, 34-year-old Dado Marino, who won a 15-round decision over Terry Allen in front of a crowd of 10,763 at the Honolulu Stadium to annex the flyweight title.

"While the fight was close and hard fought, Dado left no doubt as to his superiority, by outboxing his younger foe," wrote Yamachika. "Lacking the fire and bounce of his younger opponent, Marino relied on his experience and cunning to outsmart and outmaneuver the often over-eager Britisher."

"LaMotta Resolved To Please" by Lester Bromberg concerned "The Raging Bull's" attempt to regain the affection of New York boxing fans.

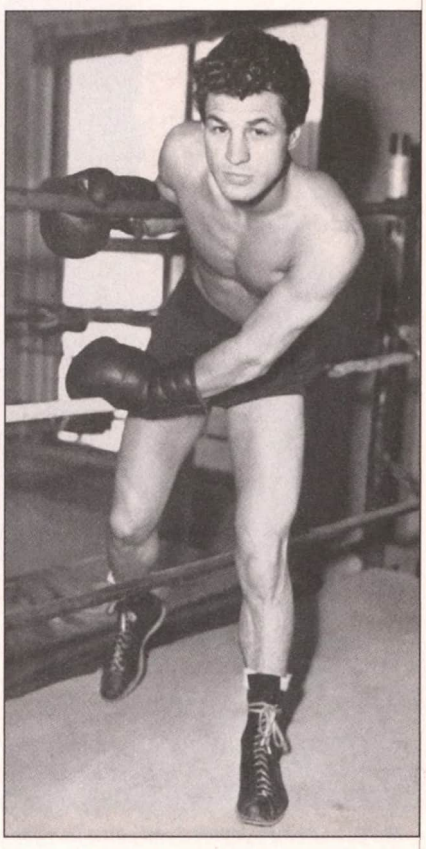
"I had three years of being a villain in New York," the middleweight champion told Bromberg. "I didn't like being booed. Who does? But I got used to it ... But that's bygones now. I think I have every fan of my city on my side and I'll do everything to keep them there. The writers? Well, that's up to them, if they want to be fair about it."

LaMotta's problem with the fans and media began with his suspicious loss to Billy Fox in 1947, and was acerbated by a subsequent loss to Robert Villemain. He felt, however, that he had redeemed himself in his title-winning fight against Marcel Cerdan and successful defense against Tiberio Mitri.

"In Sunny California" spotlighted Art Aragon's third-round knockout of Enrique Bolanos in front of a sellout crowd of 10,400 at Los Angeles' Olympic Auditorium.

Aragon, the original "Golden Boy," outslugged Bolanos in the first round, but was staggered in the second before roaring back to stop the Mexican in the third round of a bout described as a "free swinging brawl."

Fleischer also mentioned Aragon's victory in his "Nat Fleischer Says" column, suggesting that he should get a crack at lightweight champ Ike Williams. By the time Aragon got a shot the following year, Jimmy Carter had replaced Williams as 135-pound champ. Carter handled Aragon with relative ease, dropping him twice en route to a unanimous 15-round decision.



■ *Art Aragon: The original "Golden Boy"*

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Can Boxing Fatalities Be Predicted?

Each time a boxer dies we search for answers. Did the fighter have an undisclosed medical condition or injury? Was it a flagrant mismatch? Should the fight have been stopped sooner?

Traditionally, a fight should stop if a fighter is no longer defending himself or the fight is no longer competitive. Even so, the decision to halt a contest is often based on intangible factors, but could punch stats be the answer?

West Virginia University neurosurgeons Vincent J. Miele and Julian E. Bailes are studying ringside criteria in an effort to develop a standardized, objective method in determining whether or not a contest should be halted depending upon the amount of punishment the boxer receives. The researchers also seek to determine if computerized punch counts could help identify potentially fatal bouts.

According to an article published in the February 2007 issue of *Neurosurgery,* Dr. Miele and Dr. Bailes performed a computer-assisted video analysis comparing three groups of professional boxing matches: 1) a "fatal" group, consisting of bouts that resulted in death of a participant; 2) a "classic" group, representing competitive matches designated as Fight of the Year; 3) "average bouts," consisting of 4,000 televised fights using CompuBox that did not result in severe neurological injury. Heavyweight bouts were excluded due to their lower incidence of deaths.

CompuBox, which is utilized during many televised contets, is a computer-assisted punch counting system that tallies powerpunches and jabs thrown and landed by each fighter.

The researchers factored the fighter's age, ring history, experience, ability, and his opponent's ability into their results. No significant differences were found between age, weight class, stance, or country of origin. There was no significant difference between the "classic" and "fatal" groups in the average time period between bouts, previous knockout

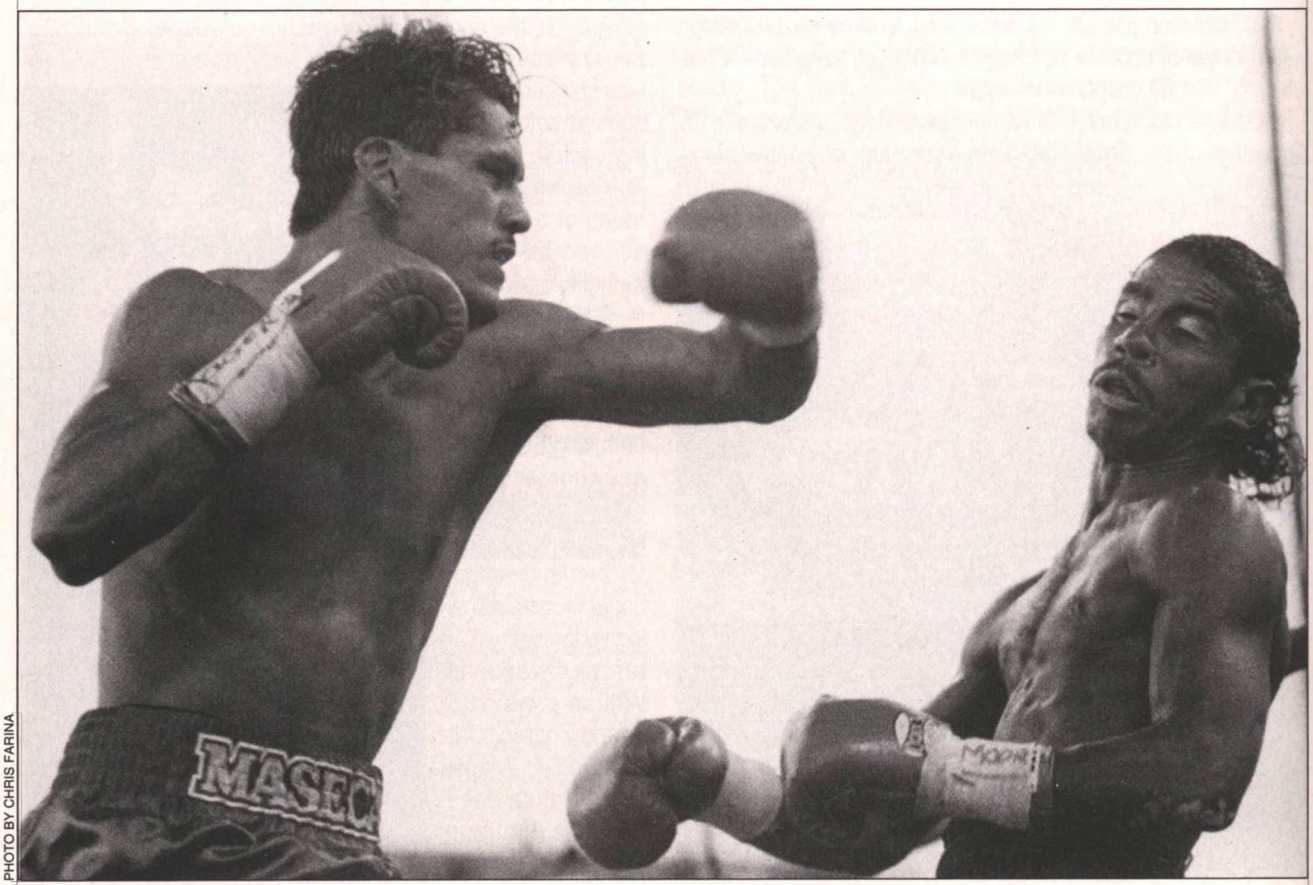


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

The Gabe Ruelas-Jimmy Garcia bout was one of the "fatal" fights examined in a recent scientific study

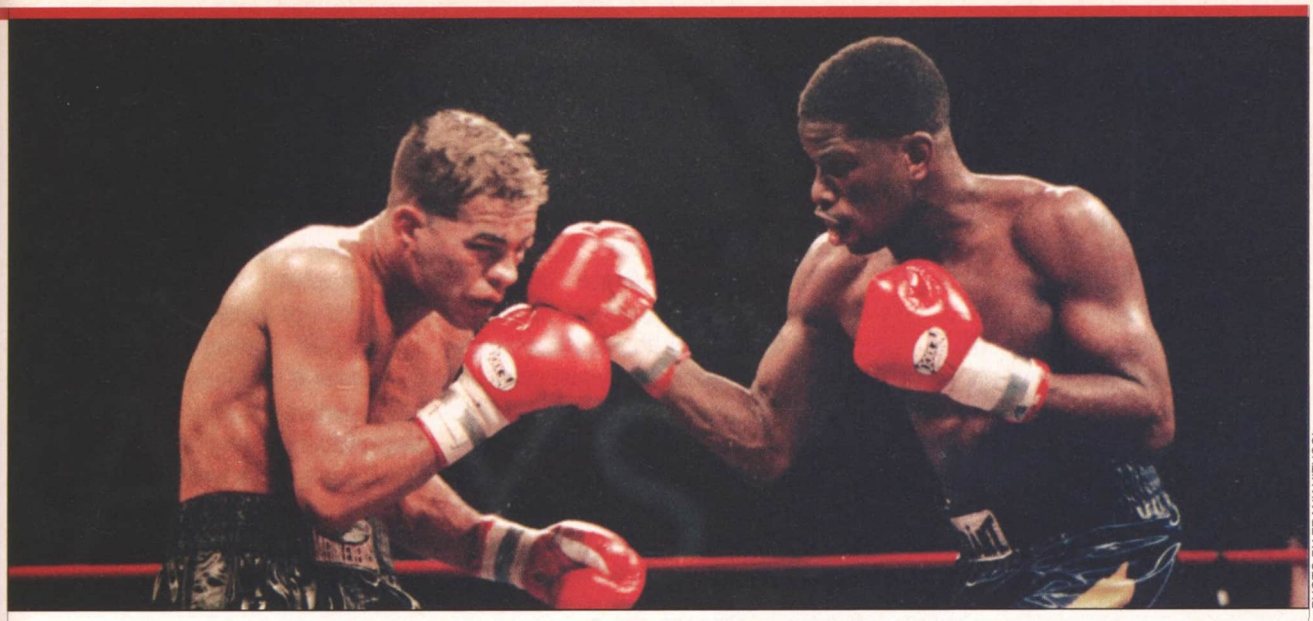


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

The study used the Ivan Robinson-Arturo Gatti slugfest as an example of a "classic" that did not end in a fatality

history, or previous losses.

It must be noted that one of the fatal fights used was between Stephan Johnson and Paul Vaden in 1999. All evidence points to Johnson having suffered a small subdural hematoma (bleeding on the surface of the brain) during his fight with Fitz Vanderpool that took place seven months prior to the Vaden fight. The investigators were not aware of this information.

The duration of the bouts was significant. Classic bouts lasted an average of 1.7 rounds longer than fatal fights. Miele and Bailes looked to determine if the fatally injured fighter showed a rapid decline in the numbers of punches thrown in the round before his last. Only two boxers who died showed a significant decrease in punches, while four actually had an increase during this round.

Regarding landed punches, the fatal-bout group showed little difference from the classic-fight group. In the classic group, the winning athlete landed an average of 20 percent more punches than the loser. In the fatal group, the surviving boxer landed an average of 39 percent more punches. Boxers in the classic bouts landed an average of 10 more punches a round than those involved in fatal bouts.

CompuBox data could alert the ring physician or referee that the fighters are entering a danger level concerning the numbers of punches thrown or landed. Unfortunately, stopping a fight based on this data would eliminate some of our greatest fights. If it would cut down on ring deaths, it would of course be worth it, but the results do not point to this conclusion.

In summary, the investigators note: "This demonstrates what many experts in the sport already know: There is little difference between classic and fatal matches."

Although CompuBox is the best method currently available for timely analysis, the strength and effect of landed punches is subjective. According to Dr. Miele, "This investigation lays the foundation for the next big step in boxing research, which I believe is going to be the use of some force-measuring device."

The Delphi Earpiece Sensor System (ESS), currently under evaluation by Formula One and NASCAR, is currently used in the Indy Racing League to measure the effects of a crash on a driver's head and neck. This type of force measuring device (accelerometer) could fit neatly into a boxer's mouthguard where it would be as close as possible to the boxer's brain.

"Data can be gathered to establish thresholds for acute and chronic brain injury," Dr. Miele said. "This data could be used to determine if an athlete's brain has 'gone over the limit' of force inflicted on it and competition should be halted for a contest or a career."

Dr. Miele will begin this study next year, but the final results might take years.

***

Both Ricky Hatton and Jose Luis Castillo fought separate opponents on a January 21 card in Las Vegas as a precursor to a June match between them. Although both won their bouts, neither looked spectacular and more attention was given to the fact that they made weight than anything else.

Castillo's weight-making troubles have been well-documented, and Hatton is known for packing on too many pounds between fights. Most likely, their performances were, in part at least, the result of poor diets and abused health between fights.

In a recent interview, Sugar Ray Leonard warned Hatton to tackle his weight problem if he wished to make the most of his career. "I know there are issues about his weight," said Leonard. "Maybe a few years ago I would have said no problem, but it will become a issue because you cannot yo-yo your weight up and down and still be at your best. One day it will catch up with you."

For fighters such as Hatton, Castillo, and James Toney, that day might have already arrived.

***

Correction: In the April 2007 issue of THE RING, in a column titled, *Can Neutrality Exist Among Boxing Officials?*, I wrote that referee Lawrence Cole had been suspended by the Texas State Athletic Commission for one year. Actually, Cole was given a three-month suspension and three months probation. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

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PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Shane Mosley looks very pleased with himself as he returns to his corner following the second round of his recent bout with Luis Collazo. Reader Lee West was also impressed by Sugar Shane's ability to perform so well at age 35.

Pillow Fights

The Nevada State Athletic Commission's new ruling of 10-ounce gloves for fighters above 135 pounds is insane. Why don't they just sanction pillow fights while they're at it? This ruling should be expeditiously reversed for fighters between 140 and 154 pounds.

LEE WEST
Brooklyn, NY

Shane Still Shines

My hat is off to Shane Mosley. He's been around for a long time, and whatever he is doing to maintain his longevity as a boxer, I hope he keeps it up. As HBO's announcers were saying during the Luis Collazo fight, Shane, who is 10 years older than Collazo at age 35, looked like the younger fighter—and fought like it too. As for Collazo, he never stopped trying, which made it a great fight for the fans.

GLOVER HILL III
Wewahitchka, FL

Calzaghe Kessler A Must

Many seem to think Joe Calzaghe has proven himself a great fighter with the one-sided beating he gave Jeff Lacy a few months ago. While Lacy may have been considered the dominant super middleweight at the time, there is still one fighter Calzaghe needs to face to prove himself the best. It's not Bernard Hopkins, Roy Jones, or Antonio Tarver. It's Denmark's Mikkel Kessler.

While Kessler may be little known (except to hardcore boxing fans) outside Europe, he is by far the best challenge for Calzaghe at the present time. A Calzaghe-Kessler bout would be huge for both fighters, and settle the argument of who exactly is the best super middleweight in the world.

JIM McGRADY
Aquebogue, New York

Ricky The Rule Breaker

After watching another Ricky Hatton fight where he constantly held and hit on the break and received no warnings or penalties from the referee, I can understand the general public's disdain for boxing.

Who picks the referees for Hatton's fights and what instructions is he given? If an official in any other major sport changed the rules for an individual player, how long do you think that official would keep his job? If boxing is to return to respectability, the rules have to apply to everyone the same. If not, then boxing's negative reputation will continue.

JOE KELLY
Pittsburgh, PA

Mayweather Over Rated

After witnessing Floyd Mayweather outclass Carlos Baldomir and Arturo Gatti, I've just about had it with the media gushing over his supremacy. They refer to him as not only undefeated, but they say he has only lost a handful of rounds in his career. Yes, Mayweather is a great fighter, but am I the only person who remembers the first Castillo fight, in which Floyd was given a gift from the judges after he

was manhandled for the majority of the fight? I am curious to see how THE RING scored the fight. With all due respect to Floyd, let's not get ahead of ourselves with the praises just because he beat two guys with over two-dozen losses between them.

FRANK COSTA
callmethekid@verizon.com

[Editor's note: 1) THE RING scored the first Mayweather-Castillo fight 116-113 in favor of Castillo; 2) Gatti (8) and Baldomir (10) have 18 losses between them.]

A Clash Of Champions

Should the proposed fight between Joe Calzaghe and Jermain Taylor or a bout between Calzaghe and Bernard Hopkins come to fruition, will it be the first meeting of reigning RING champions since the reintroduction of THE RING belt?

In a time of mass confusion and corruption within the sport, THE RING belt is the only defining title to mark the divisional champion. Moreover, THE RING's top 10 in each division clearly show the worthy challengers. You are to be applauded for your stance.

It makes me proud that two great British fighters, Ricky Hatton and Calzaghe, currently hold RING belts and are rightly regarded as the true champions in their respective weight divisions.

PAUL THORPE
Summerhill, Wales

[Editor's note: Yes, providing neither loses his title in the meantime, a bout between Calzaghe and either Taylor or Hopkins would mark the first time since the birth THE RING's championship policy in 2002 that two reigning champions have fought each other.]

A Shot At Redemption

The upcoming fight between Floyd Mayweather and Oscar De La Hoya has the makings of a historical bout. Professional boxing has sunk to perhaps its lowest point, as alphabet organizations, no-name fighters, and greedy promoters have left even the most savvy of boxing fans confused and bewildered. Yet, the best possible fight to be had in all of boxing is going to happen.

This is not the typical run-of-the-mill match of an up-and-comer fighting a washed-up former great. De La Hoya has proved that he is still one of the most skilled fighters in the business. Mayweather has a chance to cement himself as one of the greats in boxing history. De La Hoya has already done so.

The last time I shelled out my hard-earned dollars for pay-per-view, Mike Tyson feasted on Evander Holyfield's ear. For Mayweather-De La Hoya, I have zero qualms about paying to see it. For a sport that is in dire need of redemption, this fight can be the catalyst. My prediction: Mayweather by kayo in the 11th.

TIM McLEAN
Maumee, OH

Where's Barrera?

I just received my April 2007 issue of THE RING and I don't understand why Marco Antonio Barrera was not included in the top 10 of your annual "Best Fighter" poll when he received 32 points, which should put him in sixth place.

JOEY LYNCH
lynchyjo@yahoo.com

[Editor's note: The omission of Barrera was a serious oversight. The final tally should have read as follows:

1. Floyd Mayweather—141
2. Manny Pacquiao—129
3. Winky Wright—84
4. Jermain Taylor—61
5. Joe Calzaghe—49
6. Marco Antonio Barrera—32
7. Rafael Marquez—28
8. Ricky Hatton—23
9. Shane Mosley—20
10. Jose Luis Castillo—19] ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Reader Joe Lynch was one of many who wrote or e-mailed THE RING to inform us that we had left Marco Antonio Barrera off the list of the top-10 vote-getters in our annual "Best Fighter" poll. Sorry, Marco. It was a mistake, not a snub.

By Joe Santoliquito

Hopkins-Wright Slowdown

If you ever played with magnets as a child, you'll remember that throbbing feeling that would course through your hands each time you tried placing two magnets together. They repelled each other, right? Well, that's pretty much what's probably going to happen when world light heavyweight champion **Bernard Hopkins** meets **Winky Wright** on July 21, at a site that had yet to be determined as this magazine went to press—two magnets incapable of coming together.

A few things are certain: Hopkins and Wright have agreed to fight at 170 pounds for THE RING light heavyweight championship belt Hopkins currently holds, and HBO will broadcast the fight on pay-per-view.

But there's not much of a chance that this pair of cagey old campaigners producing an aesthetically pleasing fight. More than likely, it will quickly evolve into a feinting contest between two defensive specialists. (There's no truth, however, to the rumor that scoring will be done by figure skating judges based on artistic maneuvering.)

Apparently, the 42-year-old Hopkins, 47-4-1 (32), and 35-year-old Wright, 51-3-1 (25), two future Hall of Famers, think there is an audience for the fight. They've survived using guile and smarts, taking minimum risk to reap great gains.

For Hopkins, it worked against **Felix Trinidad**, **Oscar De La Hoya**, and **Antonio Tarver**. They all engaged Hopkins, serving as his ying to their yang. They punched; Hopkins counterpunched.

For Wright, it worked against **Shane Mosley** (twice), Trinidad, and **Ike Quartey**. All three were aggressive stalkers who like to be first. They were the perfect foils for Wright's make-you-miss-and-make-you-pay style.

The great debate when Hopkins meets Wright is who will be the aggressor. Most likely, it will be neither.

Noted ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* analyst **Teddy Atlas** said, "There's a good chance it's not going to be one of your more scintillating fights. I respect Bernard and I respect Winky. They have styles that obviously work for them. Those styles call for them to cover up, to counter, to stay out of danger whenever possible, to take what the other guy gives them and not necessarily force the issue.

"Those are qualities that have made them highly productive. Do they care about changing to make the fight more fan-friendly? I don't think they do. They're at a point in their careers where their priorities are pretty much established. They are who they are. They're always going to do what's right for them."

Might one of the fighters try to throw a curve ball at his opponent and do the unexpected? We'll be watching … and hoping.

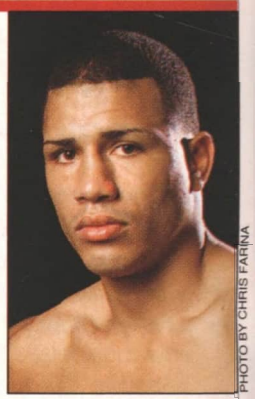


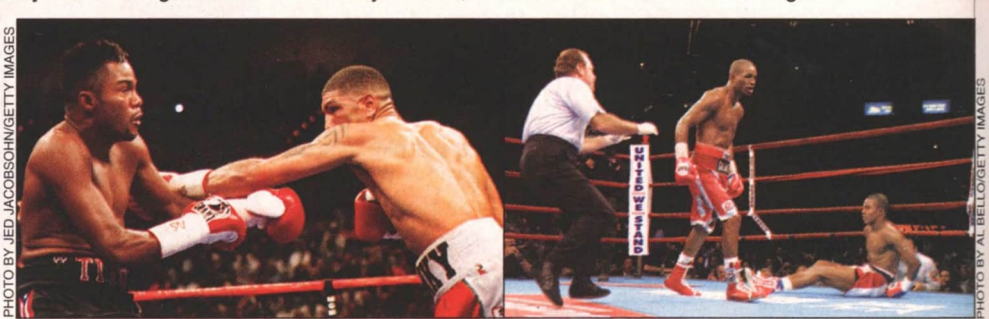
PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Cotto could have the perfect foil in Judah

LISTEN UP

It looks as if an intriguing welterweight fight will take place on June 9 between **Miguel Cotto** and **Zab Judah**, in Madison Square Garden, on HBO Pay-Per-View. The fight, however, hinged on a few things as of press time: Cotto had to beat competent but light-punching **Oktay Urkal**, in early-March, and Judah had to beat a handpicked journeyman sometime in April. If Cotto and Judah both win their tune-ups—and there's little reason to believe they won't—the Garden should to be sold out on June 9, thanks to Cotto's fervent Latino following and Judah's Brooklyn clout.

The fight means more to Judah, 34-4 (25), who is coming off a one-year suspension and $250,000 fine, stemming from the in-ring donnybrook that took place during his April 2006 fight with **Floyd Mayweather**. Judah has not beaten a credible opponent since he stopped **Cory Spinks** in the ninth round for the world welterweight championship in February 2005. Since then, not counting the TBA opponent he was scheduled to meet in April, Judah has gone 1-2, losing consecutive decisions to **Carlos Baldomir** and to Mayweather. A loss to Cotto, 28-0 (23), could mean an end of Judah's days as an elite fighter. On the other hand, this fight could supply the perfect star-making performance Cotto, needs. He's a big puncher in with someone who has a very suspect chin (remember: **Kostya Tszyu** vs. Judah), and Cotto has the kind of power that could duplicate the same double knockdown Judah experienced against Tszyu. Now, that would be worth watching. ■



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Wright (left) and Hopkins (right) need someone like Trinidad to make an exciting fight

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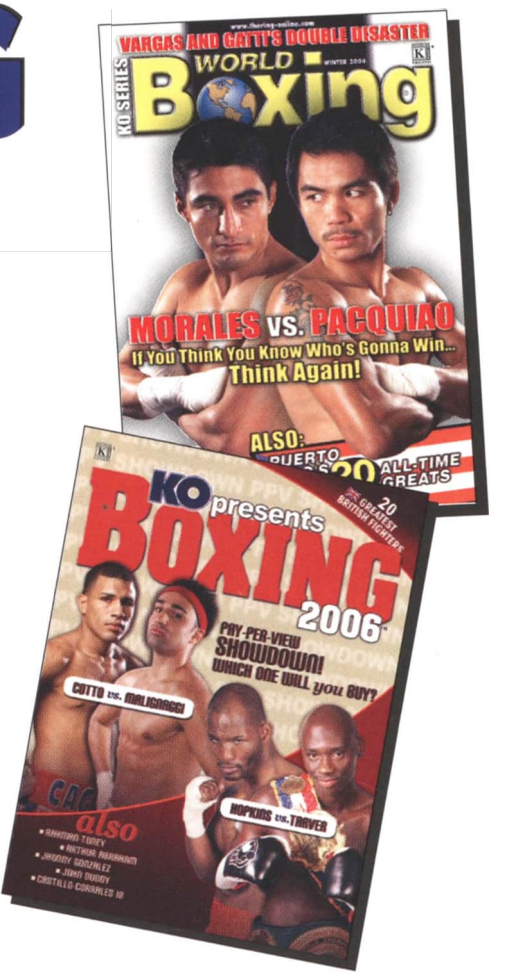

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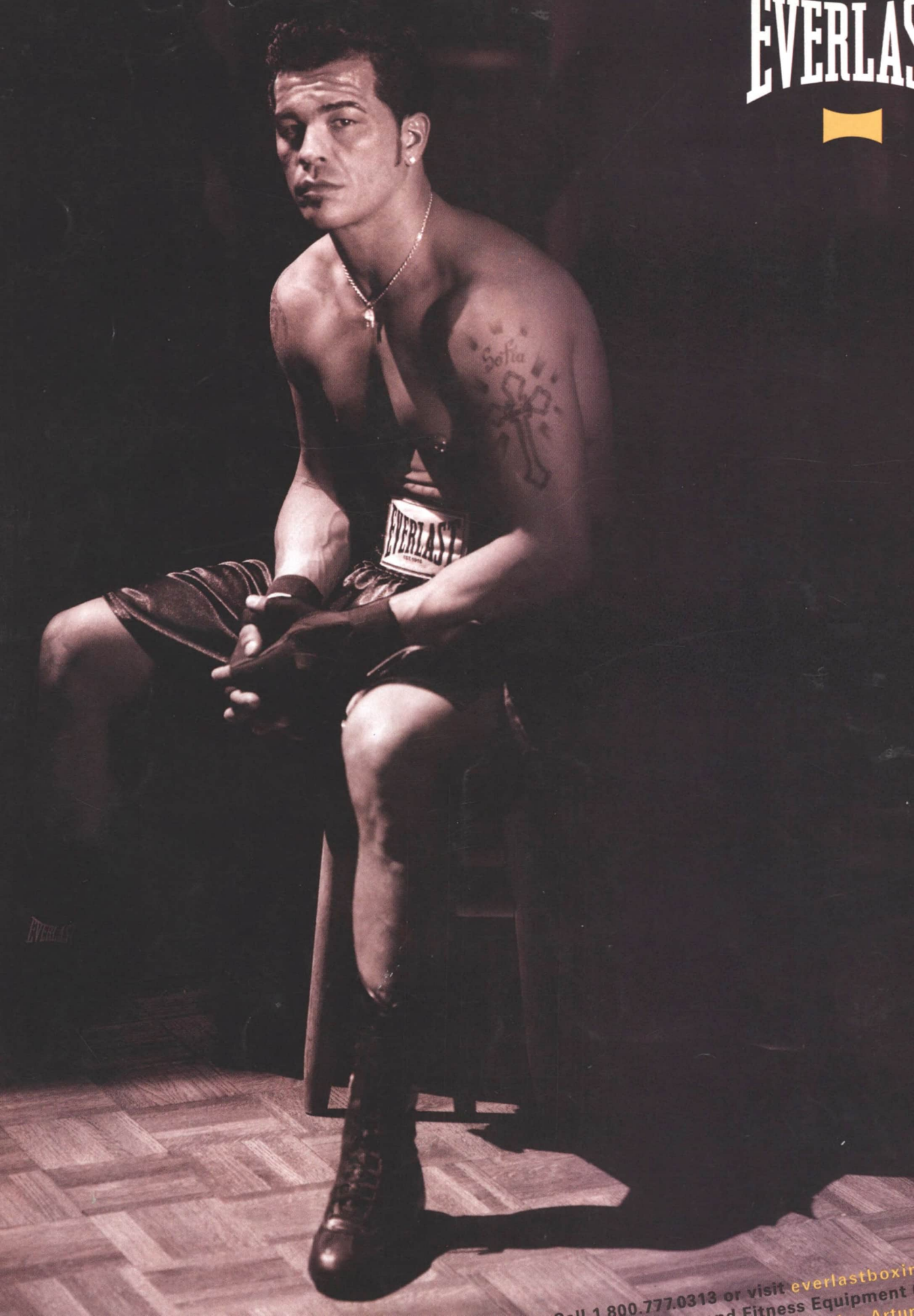
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